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VOL. IV.

PSALM LXXIX. TO CIII.

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PREFACE.

THE labour of compiling the notes of this volume may be judged of from the fact that upon my writing to one of the most scholarly men of this age for a little assistance in my researches upon that well-known psalm, the 103rd, I received a note commencing, "I have hunted through my books, and have been surprised to find that, with the exception of what is universally known, there is so little about Psalm 103." This most generous-hearted brother had the warmest zeal and love to stimulate his investigations, yet this was the result, and had I repeated the experiment upon other biblical students, and changed the psalm, I should in very few instances have received any other reply. Hence, gentle reader, your patience has been exercised in waiting for Vol. IV. of the Treasury, and my toil has been correspondingly increased. Here, however, is the volume, as portly as its fellows, and I hope not inferior to any of them; at least, I can honestly say, if it be so, it is not the fault of my endeavours, for I have bated no jot of energy, spared no cost, and withheld no time, though this last has been a very precious commodity with me, and has frequently been snatched from rest which fatigue demanded, and which prudence might have wisely yielded. The book is finished, however, and with it two-thirds of my allotted task, for which may God be praised.

I am the more surprised at the general paucity of sermons and comments upon this portion of the book of Psalms, because it contains some of the more notable compositions, such as Psalms 84, 90, 91, 92, and 103. These and some of the others are so rich that, had several volumes existed illustrating any one of them, it would not have been a matter of wonder. When I have found one sermon upon a passage, it has generally been easy to collect a score upon the same; preachers evidently run so much in ruts that they leave a large portion of the Scriptures without exposition. This suggests many thoughts, which, as they will naturally occur to every thoughtful reader, I need not enlarge upon in a mere preface, but this much may be said, we trust, without giving offence—if the habit of expounding the passages of Scripture which are read in public worship should ever become more common, the preparation for doing this in an interesting and instructive manner would greatly tend to enlarge the range of texts discussed from the pulpit, and would almost inevitably lead to the people's receiving from their teachers more of God's word and less of man's, and this would be no small benefit.

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There is no need to repeat acknowledgments of indebtedness which we have made in former volumes, let them stand in all their fulness here as there. I think it right, however, to repeat the intimation that I am not to be understood as endorsing all the passages quoted from other authors. The names are given, and each writer bears his own responsibility.

Only one word of self-defence shall further delay the courteous reader. A critic has so greatly mistaken my meaning as to find in the title to the Sermon Notes a specimen of human vanity. I am amazed at his discovery. I do not pretend to be entirely free from that vice, but no trace of it is discoverable there by my keenest and most conscientious inspection; on the contrary, I called those outlines "Hints to the Village Preacher," because I did not think those of them which are my own to be good enough to offer to my brethren in the regular ministry, but hoped that they might aid those good men, engaged all the week in business, who are generally, but I think incorrectly, called *lay-preachers*, and are not supposed to have the facilities of time and books which fall to the lot of the regular ministry. I thought this somewhat modest on my part, and did not see how it could be misunderstood. Our village ministers are among the most thoughtful and useful of our brotherhood, and I never dreamed of casting a slur upon them; as, however, I have been misunderstood, I will now, without altering the title, take higher ground, and say that I trust the hints may be useful to any preachers in city or country; for the other day I met one of the most eminent metropolitan divines, and he most kindly thanked me for having suggested to him by a hint in the Treasury a sermon which he hoped had been most acceptable to his congregation, and he remarked that there was no need to be so very bashful about the aforesaid "hints." I have followed his advice, and may now, perhaps, be misunderstood again. It is a small matter to be unjustly censured, but still I would not even seem to despise brethren in more obscure spheres, for it is the last thing in my heart.

For the generous reviews which the former volumes have received on all hands I am deeply grateful. I commit this fourth volume to the press, praying that it may, according to the Lord's will, tend to the upbuilding of his church and his own glory.

C. H. Spurgeon

Clapham, December, 1874.

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PSALM LXXIX.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—A Psalm of Asaph. *A Psalm of complaint such as Jeremiah might have written amid the ruins of the beloved city. It evidently treats of times of invasion, oppression, and national overthrow. Asaph was a patriotic poet, and was never more at home than when he rehearsed the history of his nation. Would to God that we had national poets whose song should be of the Lord.*

DIVISION.—*From verse* 1 *to* 4 *the complaint is poured out, from* 5 *to* 12 *prayer is presented, and, in the closing verse, praise is promised.*

EXPOSITION.

O GOD, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps.

2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given *to be* meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.

3 Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and *there was* none to bury *them.*

4 We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us.

1. "*O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance.*" It is the cry of amazement at sacrilegious intrusion; as if the poet were struck with horror. The stranger pollutes thine hallowed courts with his tread. All Canaan is thy land, but thy foes have ravaged it. "*Thy holy temple have they defiled.*" Into the inmost sanctuary they have profanely forced their way, and there behaved themselves arrogantly. Thus, the holy land, the holy house, and the holy city, were all polluted by the uncircumcised. It is an awful thing when wicked men are found in the church and numbered with her ministry. Then are the tares sown with the wheat, and the poisoned gourds cast into the pot. "*They have laid Jerusalem on heaps.*" After devouring and defiling, they have come to destroying, and have done their work with a cruel completeness. Jerusalem, the beloved city, the joy of the nation, the abode of her God, was totally wrecked. Alas! alas, for Israel! It is sad to see the foe in our own house, but worse to meet him in the house of God; they strike hardest who smite at our religion. The psalmist piles up the agony; he was a suppliant, and he knew how to bring out the strong points of his case. We ought to order our case before the Lord with as much care as if our success depended on our pleading. Men in earthly courts use all their powers to obtain their ends, and so also should we state our case with earnestness, and bring forth our strong arguments.

2. "*The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.*" The enemy cared not to bury the dead, and there was not a sufficient number of Israel left alive to perform the funeral rites; therefore, the precious relics of the departed were left to be devoured of vultures and torn by wolves. Beasts on which man could not feed fed on him. The flesh of creation's Lord became meat for carrion crows and hungry dogs. Dire are the calamities of war, yet have they happened to God's saints and servants. This might well move the heart of the

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poet, and he did well to appeal to the heart of God by reciting the grievous evil. Such might have been the lamentation of an early Christian as he thought of the amphitheatre and all its deeds of blood. Note in the two verses how the plea is made to turn upon God's property in the temple and the people:—we read "thine inheritance," "thy temple," "thy servants," and "thy saints." Surely the Lord will defend his own, and will not suffer rampant adversaries to despoil them.

3. "*Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem.*" The invaders slew men as if their blood was of no more value than so much water; they poured it forth as lavishly as when the floods deluge the plains. The city of holy peace became a field of blood. "*And there was none to bury them.*" The few who survived were afraid to engage in the task. This was a serious trial and grievous horror to the Jews, who evinced much care concerning their burials. Has it come to this, that there are none to bury the dead of thy family, O Lord? Can none be found to grant a shovelful of earth with which to cover up the poor bodies of thy murdered saints? What woe is here! How glad should we be that we live in so quiet an age, when the blast of the trumpet is no more heard in our streets.

4. "*We are become a reproach to our neighbours.*" Those who have escaped the common foe make a mockery of us, they fling our disasters into our face, and ask us, "Where is your God?" Pity should be shown to the afflicted, but in too many cases it is not so, for a hard logic argues that those who suffer more than ordinary calamities must have been extraordinary sinners. Neighbours especially are often the reverse of neighbourly; the nearer they dwell the less they sympathize. It is most pitiable it should be so. "*A scorn and derision to them that are round about us.*" To find mirth in others' miseries, and to exult over the ills of others, is worthy only of the devil and of those whose father he is. Thus the case is stated before the Lord, and it is a very deplorable one. Asaph was an excellent advocate, for he gave a telling description of calamities which were under his own eyes, and in which he sympathized, but we have a mightier Intercessor above, who never ceases to urge our suit before the eternal throne.

5 How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.

7 For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place.

8 O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low.

9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.

10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight *by* the revenging of the blood of thy servants *which is* shed.

11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die;

12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord.

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5. "*How long, Lord?*" Will there be no end to these chastisements? They are most sharp and overwhelming; wilt thou much longer continue them? "*Wilt thou be angry for ever?*" Is thy mercy gone so that thou wilt for ever smite? "*Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?*" There was great cause for the Lord to be jealous, since idols had been set up, and Israel had gone aside from his worship, but the psalmist begs the Lord not to consume his people utterly as with fire, but to abate their woes.

6. "*Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee.*" If thou must smite look further afield; spare thy children and strike thy foes. There are lands where thou art in no measure acknowledged; be pleased to visit these first with thy judgments, and let thine erring Israel have a respite. "*And upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.*" Hear us the prayerful, and avenge thyself upon the prayerless. Sometimes providence appears to deal much more severely with the righteous than with the wicked, and this verse is a bold appeal founded upon such an appearance. It in effect says—Lord, if thou must empty out the vials of thy wrath, begin with those who have no measure of regard for thee, but are openly up in arms against thee; and be pleased to spare thy people, who are thine notwithstanding all their sins.

7. "*For they have devoured Jacob.*" The oppressor would quite eat up the saints if he could. If these lions do not swallow us, it is because the Lord has sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths. "*And laid waste his dwelling place,*" or his pasture. The invader left no food for man or beast, but devoured all as the locust. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

8. "*O remember not against us former iniquities.*" Sins accumulate against nations. Generations lay up stores of transgressions to be visited upon their successors; hence this urgent prayer. In Josiah's days the most earnest repentance was not able to avert the doom which former long years of idolatry had sealed against Judah. Every man has reason to ask for an act of oblivion for his past sins, and every nation should make this a continual prayer. "*Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low.*" Hasten to our rescue, for our nation is hurrying down to destruction; our numbers are diminished and our condition is deplorable. Observe how penitent sorrow seizes upon the sweeter attributes, and draws her pleas from the "tender mercies" of God; see, too, how she pleads her own distress, and not her goodness, as a motive for the display of mercy. Let souls who are brought very low find an argument in their abject condition. What can so powerfully appeal to pity as dire affliction? The quaint prayer-book version is touchingly expressive: "O remember not our old sins, but have mercy upon us, and that soon; for we are come to great misery." This supplication befits a sinner's life. We have known seasons when this would have been as good a prayer for our burdened heart as any that human mind could compose.

9. "*Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name.*" This is masterly pleading. No argument has such force as this. God's glory was tarnished in the eyes of the heathen by the defeat of his people, and the profanation of his temple; therefore, his distressed servants implore his aid, that his great name may no more be the scorn of blaspheming enemies. "*And deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.*" Sin,—the root of the evil—is seen and confessed; pardon of sin is sought as well as removal of chastisement, and both are asked not as matters of right, but as gifts of grace. God's name is a second time brought into the pleading. Believers will find it their wisdom to use very frequently this noble plea: it is the great gun of the battle, the mightiest weapon in the armoury of prayer.

10. "*Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God?*" Why should those impious mouths be filled with food so sweet to them, but so bitter to us? When the afflictions of God's people become the derision of sinners, and cause them to ridicule religion, we have good ground for expostulation with the Lord. "*Let him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed.*" Justice is desired that God may be vindicated

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and feared. It is but meet that those who taunted the people of God because they smarted under the Lord's rod, should be made themselves also to smart by the same hand. If any complain of the spirit of this imprecation, we think they do so needlessly; for it is the common feeling of every patriot to desire to see his country's wrongs redressed, and of every Christian to wish a noble vengeance for the church by the overthrow of error. The destruction of Antichrist is the recompense of the blood of the martyrs, and by no means is it to be deprecated; far rather is it one of the most glorious hopes of the latter days.

11. "*Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee.*" When thy people cannot sing, and dare not shout aloud, then let their silent sigh ascend into thine ear, and secure for them deliverance. These words are suitable for the afflicted in a great variety of conditions; men of experience will know how to adapt them to their own position and to use them in reference to others. "*According to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die.*" Faith grows while it prays; the appeal to the Lord's tender mercy is here supplemented by another addressed to the divine power, and the petitioner rises from a request for those who are brought low, to a prayer for those who are on the verge of death, set apart as victims for the slaughter. How consoling is it to desponding believers to reflect that God can preserve even those who bear the sentence of death in themselves. Men and devils may consign us to perdition, while sickness drags us to the grave, and sorrow sinks us in the dust; but, there is One who can keep our soul alive, ay, and bring it up again from the depths of despair. A lamb shall live between the lion's jaws if the Lord wills it. Even in the charnel, life shall vanquish death if God be near.

12. "*And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord.*" They denied thine existence, mocked thy power, insulted thy worship, and destroyed thy house; up, therefore, O Lord, and make them feel to the full that thou art not to be mocked with impunity. Pour into their laps good store of shame because they dared insult the God of Israel. Recompense them fully, till they have received the perfect number of punishments. It will be so. The wish of the text will become matter of fact. The Lord will avenge his own elect though he bear long with them.

13 So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations.

13. "*So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations.*" The gratitude of the church is lasting as well as deep. On her tablets are memorials of great deliverances, and, as long as she shall exist, her sons will rehearse them with delight. We have a history which will survive all other records, and it is bright in every line with the glory of the Lord. From the direst calamities God's glory springs, and the dark days of his people become the prelude to unusual displays of the Lord's love and power.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is, in every respect, the pendant of Ps. lxxiv. The points of contact are not merely matters of style (cf. lxxix. 5, "how long for ever?" with lxxiv. 1, 10; lxxix. 10, יוֹדִיעַ, with lxxiv. 5; lxxix. 2, the giving over to the wild beasts, with lxxiv. 19, 14; lxxix. 13, the conception of Israel as of a flock, in which respect Ps. lxxix. is judiciously appended to Ps. lxxviii. 70—72, with Ps. lxxiv. 1 and also with Ps. lxxiv. 19.) But the mutual relationships lie still deeper. Both Psalms have the same Asaphic stamp, both stand in the same relation to Jeremiah, and both send forth their complaints

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out of the same circumstances of the time, concerning a destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem, such as only the age of the Seleucidæ (1 Macc. i. 31, iii. 45, 2 Macc. viii. 8), together with the Chaldæan period can exhibit, and in conjunction with a defiling of the Temple and a massacre of the servants of God, of the *Chasîdîm* (1 Macc. vii. 13, 2 Macc. xiv. 6), such as the age of the Seleucidæ exclusively can exhibit. The work of the destruction of the Temple which was in progress in Ps. lxxiv., appears in Psalm lxxix. as completed, and here, as in the former Psalm, one receives the impression of the outrages, not of some war, but of some persecution: it is straightway the religion of Israel for the sake of which the sanctuaries are destroyed and the faithful are massacred.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 1.—"*Thy holy temple have they defiled.*" This was not only the highest degree of the enemy's inhumanity and barbarity, ... but also a calamity to the people of God never to be sufficiently deplored. For by the overthrow of the temple the true worship of God, which had been instituted at that temple alone, appeared to be extinguished, and the knowledge of God to vanish from among mankind. No pious heart could ponder this without the greatest grief. —*Mollerus.*

Verse 1.—"*They have laid Jerusalem on heaps.*" They have made Jerusalem to be nothing but *graves.* Such multitudes were cruelly slain and murdered, that Jerusalem was, as it were, but one *grave.*—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 1—4.—In the time of the Maccabees, Demetrius, the son of Seleucus, sent Bacchides to Jerusalem; who slew the scribes, who came to require justice, and the Assideans, the first of the children of Israel who sought peace of them. Bacchides "took of them threescore men, and slew them in one day, according to the words which he wrote, the flesh of thy saints have they cast out, and their blood have they shed round about Jerusalem, and there was none to bury them." And in that last and most fearful destruction, when the eagles of Rome were gathered round the doomed city, and the temple of which God had said, "Let us depart hence;" when one stone was not to be left upon another, when the fire was to consume the sanctuary, and the foundations of Sion were to be ploughed up; when Jerusalem was to be filled with slain, and the sons of Judah were to be crucified round her walls in such thick multitudes that no more room was left for death; when insult, and shame, and scorn was the lot of the child of Israel, as he wandered an outcast, a fugitive in all lands; when all these bitter and deadly things came upon Jerusalem, it was as a punishment for many and long-repeated crimes; it was the accomplishment of a warning which had been often sent in vain. Yea, fiercely did thy foes assault thee, O Jerusalem, but thy sins more fiercely still!—"*Plain Commentary.*"

Verses 1, 4, 5.—Entering the inhabited part of the old city, and winding through some crooked, filthy lanes, I suddenly found myself on turning a sharp corner, in a spot of singular interest; the "Jews' place of Wailing." It is a small paved quadrangle; on one side are the backs of low modern houses, without door or window; on the other is the lofty wall of the Haram, of recent date above, but having below five courses of bevelled stones in a perfect state of preservation. Here the Jews are permitted to approach the sacred enclosure, and wail over the fallen temple, whose very dust is dear to them, and in whose stones they still take pleasure (Ps. cii. 14). It was Friday, and a crowd of miserable devotees had assembled—men and women of all ages and all nations dressed in the quaint costumes of every country of Europe and Asia. Old men were there,—pale, haggard, careworn men, tottering on pilgrim staves; and little girls with white faces, and lustrous black eyes, gazing wistfully now at their parents, now at the old wall. Some were on their knees, chanting mournfully from a book of Hebrew prayers, swaying their bodies to and fro; some were prostrate on the ground, pressing forehead and lips to the earth; some were close to the wall, burying their faces in the rents and crannies of the old stones; some were kissing them, some had their arms

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spead out as if they would clasp them to their bosoms, some were bathing them with tears, and all the while sobbing as if their hearts would burst. It was a sad and touching spectacle. Eighteen centuries of exile and woe have not dulled their hearts' affections, or deadened their feelings of devotion. Here we see them assembled from the ends of the earth, poor, despised, down-trodden outcasts,—amid the desolations of their fatherland, beside the dishonoured ruins of their ancient sanctuary,—chanting, now in accents of deep pathos, and now of wild woe, the prophetic words of their own psalmist,—"*O God the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled . . . We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. How long, Lord? wilt thou be angry for ever?*"—*J. L. Porter, in "The Giant Cities of Bashan."* 1865.

Verse 2.—"*The dead bodies of thy servants,*" etc. It is a true saying of S. Augustine, The care of our funeral, the manner of our burial, the exequial pomp, all these *magis sunt vivorum solatia quam subsidia mortuorum*, are rather comforts for the living than any way helps for the dead. To be interred profiteth not the party deceased; his body feels it not, his soul regards it not; and we know that many holy martyrs have been excluded from burial, who in a Christian scorn thereof bespake their persecutors in words of those which were slain at Pharsalia: "Thou effectest nothing by this anger; what matters it whether disease dissolve the body, or the funeral pile?" But yet there is an honesty* which belongeth to the dead body of man. Jehu commanded Jezebel to be buried; David thanked the people of Jabesh-Gilead for burying of Saul. Peter, who commanded Ananias and Sapphira, those false abdicators of their patrimony, to die, commanded to have them buried being dead. It is an axiom of charity, *Mortuo non prohibeas gratiam*, withhold not kindness from the dead. It shows our love and regard for men in our own flesh to see them buried; it manifesteth our faith and hope of the resurrection; and therefore when that body which is to rise again, and to be made glorious and immortal in heaven, shall be cast to the fowls of the air or beasts of the field, it argueth in God great indignation against sin (Jer. xxii. 19, of Jehoiakim, "He shall be buried as an ass is buried, and cast forth without the gates of Jerusalem"); in man inhuman and barbarous cruelty.—*John Dunster, in "Prodromus."* 1613.

Verses 2, 3.—[The following extract is from the writings of a godly monk who applies the language of the Psalm to the persecutions of his time. He wrote at Rome during the period of the Reformation, and was evidently a favourer of the gospel.] At this day what river is there, what brook, in this our afflicted Europe, (if it is still ours) that we have not seen flowing with the blood of Christians? And that too shed by the swords and spears of Christians? Wherefore there is made a great wailing in Israel; and the princes and elders mourn; the young men and virgins are become weak, and the beauty of the women is changed. Why? The holy place itself is desolate as a wilderness. Hast thou ever seen so dire a spectacle? They have piled up in heaps the dead bodies of thy servants to be devoured by birds: the unburied remains of thy saints, I say, they have given to the beasts of the earth. What greater cruelty could ever be committed? So great was the effusion of human blood at that time, that the rivulets, yea, rather, the rivers round the entire circuit of the city, flowed with it. And thus truly is the form of our most beautiful city laid waste, and its loveliness; and so reduced is it, that not even the men who carry forth dead bodies for burial can be obtained, though pressed with the offer of large rewards; so full of fear and horror were their minds: and this was all the more bitter, because "*We are become a reproach to those round about us,*" and are spoken of in derision by the infidels abroad and by enemies at home. Who is so bold as to endure this and live? How long therefore shall this most bitter disquietude last?—*Giambattista Folengo.* 1490—1559.

* *i. e.* a right, a proper respect.

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Verse 2.—"*Dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls.*" With what unconcern are we accustomed to view, on all sides of us, multitudes, "dead in trespasses and sins," torn in pieces, and devoured by wild passions, filthy lusts, and infernal spirits, those dogs and vultures of the moral world! Yet, to a discerning eye, and a thinking mind, the latter is by far the more melancholy sight of the two.—*George Horne.*

Verse 2.—"*Thy servants.*" "*Thy saints.*" No temporal wrath, no calamities whatsoever can separate the Lord's children from God's love and estimation of them, nor untie the relation between God and them: for here, albeit their carcases fall, and be devoured by the fowls of heaven and beasts of the earth, yet remain they the Lord's servants and saints under these sufferings.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—"*We are become a reproach.*" If God's professing people degenerate from what themselves and their fathers were, they must expect to be told of it; and it is well if a just reproach will help to bring us to a true repentance. But it has been the lot of the gospel Israel to be made unjustly a reproach and derision; the apostles themselves were "counted as the off-scouring of all things." —*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—"*A scorn and derision to them that are round about us.*" This was more grievous to them than stripes or wounds, saith Chrysostom, because these being inflicted upon the body are divided after a sort betwixt soul and body, but scorns and reproaches do wound the soul only. *Habet quendam aculeum contumelia*, they leave a sting behind them, as Cicero observeth.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—It is the height of reproach a father casts upon his child when he commands his slave to beat him. Of all outward judgments this is the sorest, to have strangers rule over us, as being made up of shame and cruelty. If once the heathen come into God's inheritance, no wonder the church complains that she is "*become a reproach to her neighbours, a shame and derision to all round about her.*"—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 5.—"*How long, Lord? Wilt thou be angry for ever?*" The voice of complaint says not, How long, Lord, shall this wickedness of our enemy endure? How long shall we see this desolation? But, how long, O Lord? Wilt thou be angry for ever? We are admonished, therefore, in this passage, that we should recognize the anger of God against us in all our afflictions, lest as the nations are accustomed, we only accuse the malice of our enemies, and never think of our sins and the divine punishment. It cannot be that he who acknowledges the anger of God that is upon him, should not at the same time acknowledge his fault also, unless he wishes to attribute the iniquity to God of being angry and inflicting stripes upon the undeserving.—*Musculus.*

Verse 5.—The word "*jealousy*" signifies not mere revenge but revenge mingled with love, for unless he loved, says Jerome, he would not be jealous, and after the manner of a husband avenge the sin of his wife.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 6.—Neglect of prayer by unbelievers is threatened with punishment. The prophet's imprecation is the same in effect with a threatening, see Jer. x. 25, and same imprecation, Ps. lxxix. 6. The prophets would not have used such an imprecation against those that call not upon God, but that their neglect of calling on his name makes them liable to his wrath and fury; and no neglect makes men liable to the wrath of God but the neglect of duty. Prayer, then, is a duty even to the heathen, the neglect of which provokes him to pour out his fury on them.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 7.—"*They have devoured Jacob.*" Like wolves who cruelly tear and devour a flock of sheep. For the word which follows signifies not only a habitation in general, but also a sheepcot.—*Mollerus.*

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Verse 8.—"*O remember not against us former iniquities.*" The prophet numbers himself with the people not only in their affliction, but also in their distress, and liability to the anger of God because of the crimes committed. He was not a partner in those enormous sins by which they had provoked the jealousy of God, and yet he exempts not himself from the people at large. Thus, in the following verse, he says, "*And purge away our sins.*" He says not, Remember not the iniquity of this people; nor, And purge away their sins: But, Remember not *our* iniquities and, Purge away *our* sins. In this way the prophets, though holy men, were wont to make themselves sharers of the people's sins, not by sinning, but by weeping and praying and imploring the mercy of God. See Isaiah lix. 12. "*Our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us.*" . . . Daniel ix. 5. "*We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled,*" etc. 1. Let us also follow this example, that so far we may have fellowship with the whole Church, that we may be partners of those who truly love and worship God. 2. Then, that abstaining from false worship, we may not sin wickedly with the wicked. 3. That whenever we ought to weep or pray, we may mourn and confess not only our own, but also the shortcomings of the whole church corporate, as if they were common to ourselves, even if we have no part in them, and may implore for them the mercy of God.—*Musculus.*

Verse 8.—"*O remember not against us former iniquities.*" The Jews have a saying, that there is no punishment happens to Israel, but there is an ounce in it for the sin of the calf; their meaning is, that this is always remembered and visited, according to Exodus xxxii. 34; the phrase may take in all the sins of former persons, their ancestors, and of former times, from age to age, they had continued in, which had brought ruin upon them; and all their own sins of nature and of youth, all past ones to the present time.—*John Gill.*

Verse 8 —"*O remember not against us former iniquities.*" Old debts vex most; the delay of payment increases them by interest upon interest; and the return of them being unexpected, a person is least provided for them. We count old sores, breaking forth, incurable. Augustus wondered at a person sleeping quietly that was very much in debt, and sent for his pillow, saying, "surely there is some strange virtue in it, that makes him rest so secure." My brethren, if one debt unto God's law be more than the whole creation can satisfy, what do any of us mean to rest secure with so vast a burden upon our consciences and accounts? Ah! take heed thou beest not surprised and arrested with old debts. *O God, thou rememberest former iniquities against us.* God will call over, and charge thy sins upon thee, when all the sweet is gone.—*Elias Pledger* (—1676), *in* "*Morning Exercises.*"

Verse 8.—"*O remember not against us former iniquities.*" The only right way to remedy a miserable condition, is to sue for the remission of sins, and for the renewed evidence of reconciliation: for before the church here do ask anything for their outward delivery, they pray, "*O remember not against us former iniquities.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 8.—"*Speedily.*" Lest they come too late, for we are at our last gasp. —*John Trapp.*

Verse 8.—"*Prevent.*" God's mercy must anticipate, "*come to meet,*" man's necessity.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 8.—"*We are brought very low.*" Literally, "We are greatly thinned." Few of us remain.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 8.—"*We are brought very low.*" We are very greatly exhausted (emptied out); that is, we are utterly destitute of all things, both fortune, and strength of mind and body, just like a well or a vessel completely emptied. —*Martin Geier.*

Verse 8.—"*Very low.*" Past the hopes of all human help, and therefore the glory of our deliverance will be wholly thine.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 9.—"*Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name*

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and deliver us." "Help us" under our troubles, that we may bear them well; "help us" out of our troubles, that the spirit may not fail. "Deliver us" from sin, and from sinking.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 9.—"*God of our salvation.*" If human reason were to judge of the many and great blows wherewith God so often smote and wasted his people, it would call God not the Saviour of the people, but the destroyer and oppressor. But the faith of the Prophet judges far otherwise of God, and sees even in an angry and pursuing God, the salvation of his people. The gods of the nations, though they do not afflict even in temporal things, are gods not of the salvation of their worshippers but of their perdition. But our God, even when he is most severely angry, and smites, is not the God of destruction, but of salvation—*Musculus.*

Verse 9.—"*For thy name's sake.*" Twice the appeal is made "*for thy name's sake;*" that revelation of God which he had made of himself to Moses when he passed by and proclaimed the name of Jehovah, Ex. xxiv. 6, 7. Compare Ps. xx. 1; xxiii. 3; xxix. 2.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 9 —"*For thy name's sake.*"—The good which God doth unto his church, be it temporal or spiritual, is for his own sake. What I do (saith God), I do for mine holy name's sake; there is nothing to move me but mine own name; that is holy, great, and glorious, and I will for my name's sake do much for my church and people. That they were preserved in Babylon, was for his holy name's sake; that they were brought out of Babylon, was for his holy name's sake; that they were replanted in Canaan, was for his holy name's sake; that they had a temple, sacrifices, priests, prophets, ordinances again, was for his name's sake; when they were near to destruction often, in former days, God wrought for his name's sake, Ezek. xx.; so Isaiah xlviii. 8, 9. It is not for the enemies' sake that God doth preserve or deliver his people; nor for their sakes, their prayers, tears, faith, obedience, holiness, that he doth great things for them, bestows great mercies upon them; but it is for his own name's sake. For man's sake God cursed the earth, Gen. viii. 21; but it is for his name's sake that he blesseth it. The choicest mercies God's people have, are for his name's sake: they have pardon of sin for his name's sake, Ps. xxv. 11, 1 John ii., 12; purging of sin for his name's sake; Ps. lxxix. 9; leading in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake, Ps. xxiii. 2; quickening of their dead and dull hearts for his name's sake, Ps. cxliii. 11. Though his people offend him, yet he forsakes them not, for his great name's sake.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 9.—If God could not be more glorified in our peace and reconciliation, than in our death and damnation, it were a wicked thing to desire it. But God hath cleared this up to us, that he is no loser by acts of mercy. In this lies the greatest revenue of his crown, or else he would not love "mercy rather than sacrifice." God is free to choose what suits his own heart best, and most conduceth to the exalting of his great name: and he delights more in the mercy shown to one than in the blood of all the damned, that are made a sacrifice to his justice. And, indeed, he had a higher end in their damnation than their suffering; and that was the enhancing of the glory of his mercy, in his saved ones. This is the beautiful piece God takes delight in, and the other but the shadow of it. Then thou art in a fit disposition to pray for peace, and mayest go with encouragement when thy heart is deeply affected with the honour that will accrue to God by it. It is an argument God will not deny. "This," said Abigail to David, "shall be no grief to thee nor offence of heart unto my Lord," 1 Sam. xxv.; she meant, he should never have cause to repent that he was kept from shedding blood. Thus mayest thou plead with God, and say, O Lord, when I shall with saints and angels be praising thy pardoning grace in heaven, it will not grieve thee that thy mercy kept thee from shedding my blood, damning my soul in hell.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 9.—When the Lord's people are brought very low, let them not look for a lifting up or relief except from God only; therefore say they here, "*Help us, O Lord.*" Such as have laid hold on God for salvation promised in the

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covenant, may also look for particular deliveries out of particular troubles, as appendices of the main benefit of salvation; therefore, "*Help us, O God of our salvation,*" say they. When men do ask anything, the granting whereof may glorify God, they may confidently expect to have it; and in special when God may be so glorified, and his people may also be preserved and comforted: "*Help us* (say they) *for the glory of thy name: and deliver us.*" As the conscience of sin useth to step in oftener between us and mercy, so must we call oftener for remission of sin; for earnest affection can double and treble the same petition without babbling: "*Deliver us, and purge away our sins.*" It is the glory of the Lord to forget sin, and when remission of sins is prayed for according to God's promise, the Lord's glory is engaged for the helping of faith to obtain it: "*Purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 11.—"*Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee.*" The propriety of styling the sons of Adam "*prisoners,*" can scarcely fail to be discerned when we remember the restraint which the immortal spirit endures whilst it inhabits its present earthly house, or recollect the hardships to which many of our race are subjected, or, once more, the degrading slavery to which they reduce themselves by serving their own lusts and refusing to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ would make them free. Now, in whichever of these senses men are prisoners, it is clear that they have occasion and that they are wont to sigh, and that it is the part of the pious and faithful believer in God to bear this in mind, and, inasmuch as he has put on bowels of compassion, to say, as well for others as for himself, "*Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee.*" Three things, then, are suggested by the first clause of the passage before us. The first is, that all who live in this world are prisoners. . . . . We would go on to remark, secondly, that these various prisoners have their respective sorrowful sighings. Thirdly, then, let it be observed, will the believer, conscious of these several sighings of the crowd of prisoners whom he sees all around him, pray to the Almighty that they may come before his everlasting presence.—*W. C. Le Breton.* (1849.)

Verse 11.—"*The sighing.*" The nature of a sigh will suggest to us some important particulars connected with the state of bondage spoken of in the text. A sigh is an *unexpressed declaration.* Although we do not speak, still we can tell a long tale of sorrow with a sigh. How often the mourner who will not tell a human being of his grief, will vent it when he is alone, with a long-drawn, an uneven sigh! Now, I direct your attention to this, because it is a perfect picture of the spiritual condition in which some men are. They are not loud in their complaints; they are not standing in the corners of the streets proclaiming their exceeding sinfulness; they are not continually making their neighbours and their friends hear them preach about their vileness—a vileness which, if any one else attributed to them, would stir up all their wrath. Theirs is not the character of men in strife; but of men bearing a heavy burden, which presses from them an evidence of what they endure. And if any of you, brethren, thus walk in sighs and sorrow before God, he takes these sighs as applications to him for relief. Your misery, if entirely pent in, would be obstinate impenitency, but if vented, even in a sigh, is a declaration of your need. Let me encourage you, brethren, not to spare these evidences of your state. There are times when you feel so dead that you cannot enter into long confessions; when the spirit is so weary that you feel that you cannot speak. Much might at such a season be spoken by a sigh. "Destroy it not," we say, "for a blessing is in it:" pour it forth, and it will reach the throne. And here it will prove to be not only *an unexpressed declaration of your state,* but also *an unexpressed wish for deliverance* therefrom. When the captive gazes through the bars of iron which night and day stand like mute sentinels before the narrow window of his cell, and when his eyes fall upon the green fields and groves beyond, he sighs, and turns away from the scene with a wish. He spake not a word, yet he wished. That sigh was a wish that he could be set free.

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And such sighs as these are heard by God. Your longings, your sorrows, when they are not fulfilled, your sad thoughts,—"Oh! when shall I be delivered from the burden of my sin, and from the coldness of my heart!"—all these wishes were your sighs, and they have been heard on high.—*Philip Bennett Power.*

Verse 11.—"*The prisoner.*" An eastern prison is still a place of great misery, chiefly from the limited supply of water to the prisoners.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 11.—"*Come before thee.*"

Though not a human voice he hears,
And not a human form appears
His solitude to share,
He is not all alone—the eye
Of Him who hears the prisoner's sigh
Is even on him there.

—*J. L. Chester.*

Verse 11.—"*Preserve thou those that are appointed to die.*" Ought not pious people more closely to imitate their heavenly Father in caring for those who have been condemned to die? An eminent Christian lady keeps a record of all who have been sentenced to death, so far as she hears of them, and prays for them every day till their end come. Is not such conduct in sympathy with the heart of God!—*William S. Plummer.*

Verse 12.—"*Render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom,*" etc. This may seem to be contrary to common justice; because that the punishment should not exceed the fault. But here you are to know, that this hath not respect unto what the enemies of God's church have acted, but what they have deserved. And therefore when the prophet here says, "*Render unto our neighbours sevenfold,*" it is not sevenfold beyond their deserts; for one scorn that a wicked man poureth upon a child of God (and so upon God), cannot be recompensed with ten thousand reproaches poured upon wicked men. The least reproach poured upon God is an infinite wrong. And the reproach of his people is so much his, as he reckons it as his own; and will therefore render to their enemies their reproach "*sevenfold*" (and that's but equal) "*into their bosom.*"—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 12.—"*Unto our neighbours.*" Because their scorn was more intolerable, and also more inexcusable than the oppression of distant enemies.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 12.—"*Into their bosom.*" An expression which originally seems to have had reference to the practice of carrying and holding things in the lap, or the front fold of the flowing oriental dress, has in usage the accessory sense of retribution or retaliation.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

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HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 4.—Saints the subject of derision to sinners. When justly so. When unjustly. What do they see to excite ridicule; what shall we do under the trial; how will it end?

Verse 5.—I. The cause of the anger: jealousy. II. The moderation of it. If it continued for ever, the people would perish, the promises be unfulfilled, the covenant fail, and the Lord's honour be impeached. III. The staying of it. By prayer; by pleading his name, his glory, and the blood of Jesus.

Verse 8.—A sinner's confession, petition, and plea.

Verse 9.—I. A threefold prayer. II. An encouraging title: "God of our salvation." III. A victorious plea.

Verse 9.—I. The Prayer. "Help us," etc. 1. Purge away sin. 2. Deliver us from our troubles. 3. Help us to serve thee in future. II. The Plea. 1. For thy name's sake. 2. The glory of thy name. 3. The glory of thy name as our salvation. The order in both cases is inverted.—*G. R.*

Verse 10.—The revenge for the martyrs, which it is lawful and incumbent upon us to desire.

Verse 11.—I. The prisoner. 1. Under forced bondage to sin. 2. Under the bondage of conviction. 3. In the dungeon of despair. II. The prisoner's application for relief. III. The source from which he looked for help.—*P. B. Power.*

Verse 11.—I. The degree of protection solicited: "According to the greatness of thy power." II. The protection itself: "Preserve thou." III. The objects of it: "Those that are appointed to die."—*W. C. Le Breton.*

Verse 11.—I. Mournful condition. A prisoner, sighing, appointed to die. II. Hopeful facts: a God, a God hearing sighs, a God of great power. III. Suitable prayers: "come before thee": "preserve."

Verse 11.—"*Appointed to die*," used as a description of deep spiritual distress. Fears of the divine decree, of having apostatised, of having sinned away the day of grace, of the sin which is unto death, &c. How these cases can be effectually met.

Verse 13.—The obligations of the Protestant church based on her martyrs' blood, her great deliverances, her nearness to God. She ought to secure gospel teaching to coming generations.

Verse 13.—I. Relation claimed: "We thy people, the sheep of," etc. II. Obligation admitted: "So we," etc., when thou hast interposed for our deliverance, we will praise thee. III. Resolution formed. 1. To give thanks for ever. 2. To transmit his praise to generations following.—*G. R.*

WORK UPON THE SEVENTY-NINTH PSALM.

"*Prodromus, or the Literall Destruction of Hierusalem as it is described in the 79th Psalme.* . . . . 1618." [By JOHN DUNSTER.]

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PSALM LXXX.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician upon Shoshannim-Eduth. *For the fourth time we have a song upon Shoshannim, or the lilies; the former ones being Psalms* xlv., lx., *and* lxix. *Why this title is given it would be difficult to say in every case, but the delightfully poetical form of the present Psalm may well justify the charming title.* Eduth *signifies testimony. The Psalm is a testimony of the church as a "lily among thorns." Some interpreters understand the present title to refer to an instrument of six strings, and Schleusner translates the two words, "the hexachord of testimony." It may be that further research will open up to us these "dark sayings upon a harp." We shall be content to accept them as evidence that sacred song was not lightly esteemed in the days of old.* A Psalm of Asaph. *A latter Asaph we should suppose, who had the unhappiness to live, like the "last minstrel," in evil times. If by the Asaph of David's day, this Psalm was written in the spirit of prophecy, for it sings of times unknown to David.*

DIVISION.—*The Psalm divides itself naturally at the refrain which occurs three times: "Turn us again, O God," etc. Verses* 1—3 *is an opening address to the Lord God of Israel; from* 4—7 *is a lamentation over the national woe and from* 8—19 *the same complaint is repeated, the nation being represented in a beautiful allegory as a vine. It is a mournful Psalm, and its lilies are lilies of the valley.*

EXPOSITION.

GIVE ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest *between* the cherubims, shine forth.

2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come *and* save us.

3 Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

1. "*Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel.*" Hear thou the bleatings of thy suffering flock. The name is full of tenderness, and hence is selected by the troubled psalmist: broken hearts delight in names of grace. Good old Jacob delighted to think of God as the Shepherd of Israel, and this verse may refer to his dying expression: "From thence is the Shepherd, the stone of Israel." We may be quite sure that he who deigns to be a shepherd to his people will not turn a deaf ear to their complaints. "*Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock.*" The people are called here by the name of that renowned son who became a second father to the tribes, and kept them alive in Egypt; possibly they were known to the Egyptians under the name of "the family of Joseph," and if so, it seems most natural to call them by that name in this place. The term may, however, refer to the ten tribes of which Manasseh was the acknowledged head. The Lord had of old in the wilderness led, guided, shepherded all the tribes; and, therefore, the appeal is made to him. The Lord's doings in the past are strong grounds for appeal and expectation as to the present and the future. "*Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.*" The Lord's especial presence was revealed upon the mercy-seat between the cherubim, and in all our pleadings we should come to the Lord by this way: only upon the mercy-seat will God reveal his grace, and only there can we hope to commune with him. Let us ever plead the name of Jesus, who is our true mercy-seat, to whom we may come boldly, and through whom we may look for a display of the glory of the Lord on our behalf. Our greatest dread is the withdrawal

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of the Lord's presence, and our brightest hope is the prospect of his return. In the darkest times of Israel, the light of her Shepherd's countenance is all she needs.

2. "*Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us.*" It is wise to mention the names of the Lord's people in prayer, for they are precious to him. Jesus bears the names of his people on his breastplate. Just as the mention of the names of his children has power with a father, so is it with the Lord. The three names were near of kin; Ephraim and Manasseh represent Joseph, and it was meet that Benjamin, the other son of the beloved Rachel, should be mentioned in the same breath: these three tribes were wont to march together in the wilderness, following immediately behind the ark. The prayer is that the God of Israel would be mighty on behalf of his people, chasing away their foes, and saving his people. O that in these days the Lord may be pleased to remember every part of his church, and make all her tribes to see his salvation. We would not mention our own denomination only, but lift up a prayer for all the sections of the one church.

3. "*Turn us again, O God.*" It is not so much said, "turn our captivity," but turn "us." All will come right if we are right. The best turn is not that of circumstances but of character. When the Lord turns his people he will soon turn their condition. It needs the Lord himself to do this, for conversion is as divine a work as creation; and those who have been once turned unto God, if they at any time backslide, as much need the Lord to turn them again as to turn them at the first. The word may be read, "restore us;" verily, it is a choice mercy that "he restoreth my soul." "*And cause thy face to shine.*" Be favorable to us, smile upon us. This was the high priest's blessing upon Israel: what the Lord has already given us by our High priest and Mediator we may right confidently ask of him. "*And we shall be saved.*" All that is wanted for salvation is the Lord's favour. One glance of his gracious eye would transform Tophet into Paradise. No matter how fierce the foe, or dire the captivity, the shining face of God ensures both victory and liberty. This verse is a very useful prayer. Since we too often turn aside, let us often with our lips and heart cry, "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

4 O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against
the prayer of thy people?
5 Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them
tears to drink in great measure.
6 Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our
enemies laugh among themselves.
7 Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine;
and we shall be saved.

4. "*O Lord God of Hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?*" How long shall the smoke of thy wrath drown the smoking incense of our prayers? Prayer would fain enter thy holy place but thy wrath battles with it, and prevents its entrance. That God should be angry with us when sinning seems natural enough, but that he should be angry even with our prayers is a bitter grief. With many a pang may the pleader ask, "How long?" Commander of all the hosts of thy creatures, able to save thy saints in their extremity, shall they for every cry to thee in vain?

5. "*Thou feedest them with the bread of tears.*" Their meat is seasoned with brine distilled from weeping eyes. Their meals, which were once such pleasant seasons of social merriment, are now like funeral feasts to which each man contributes his bitter morsel. Thy people ate bread of wheat before, but now they receive from thine own hand no better diet than bread of tears.

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"*And givest them tears to drink in great measure.*" Tears are both their food and their drink, and that without stint. They swallow tierces of tears, and swim in gulfs of grief, and all this by God's own appointment; not because their enemies have them in their power by force of arms, but because their God refuses to interpose. Tear-bread is even more the fruit of the curse than to eat bread in the sweat of one's face, but it shall by divine love be turned into a greater blessing by ministering to our spiritual health.

6. "*Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours.*" Always jealous and malicious, Edom and Moab exulted over Israel's troubles, and then fell to disputing about their share of the spoil. A neighbour's jeer is ever most cutting, especially if a man has been superior to them, and claimed to possess more grace. None are so unneighbourly as envious neighbours. "*And our enemies laugh among themselves.*" They find mirth in our misery, comedy in our tragedy, salt for their wit in the brine of our tears, amusement in our amazement. It is devilish to sport with another's griefs; but it is the constant habit of the world which lieth in the wicked one to make merry with the saints' tribulations; the seed of the serpent follow their progenitor and rejoice in evil.

7. "*Turn us again, O God of hosts.*" The prayer rises in the form of its address to God. He is here the God of Hosts. The more we approach the Lord in prayer and contemplation the higher will our ideas of him become.

8 Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.

9 Thou preparedst *room* before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.

10 The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof *were like* the goodly cedars.

11 She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river.

12 Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?

13 The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.

14 Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine;

15 And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself.

16 *It is* burned with fire, *it is* cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.

17 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself.

18 So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.

19 Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

8. "*Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt.*" There it was in unfriendly soil: the waters of the Nile watered it not, but were as death to its shoots, while the inhabitants of the land despised it and trampled it down. Glorious was the right hand of the Lord when with power and great wonders he removed his pleasant plant in the teeth of those who sought its destruction. "*Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.*" Seven nations were digged out to make space for the vine of the Lord; the old trees, which long had engrossed the

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soil, were torn up root and branch; oaks of Bashan, and palm trees of Jericho were displaced for the chosen vine. It was securely placed in its appointed position with divine prudence and wisdom. Small in appearance, very dependent, exceeding weak, and apt to trail on the ground, yet the vine of Israel was chosen of the Lord, because he knew that by incessant care, and abounding skill, he could make of it a goodly fruitbearing plant.

9. "*Thou preparedst room before it.*" The weeds, brambles, and huge stones were cleared; the Amorites, and their brethren in iniquity, were made to quit the scene, their forces were routed, their kings slain, their cities captured, and Canaan became like a plot of land made ready for a vineyard. "*And didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.*" Israel became settled and established as a vine well rooted, and then it began to flourish and to spread on every side. This analogy might be applied to the experience of every believer in Jesus. The Lord has planted us, we are growing downward, "rooting roots," and by his grace we are also advancing in manifest enlargement. The same is true of the church in a yet closer degree, for at this moment through the goodwill of the dresser of the vineyard her branches spread far and wide.

10. "*The hills were covered with the shadow of it.*" Israel dwelt up to the mountains' summits, cultivating every foot of soil. The nation multiplied and became so great that other lands felt its influence, or were shadowed by it. "*And the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars.*" The nation itself was so great that even its tribes were powerful and worthy to take rank among the mighty. A more correct rendering describes the cedars as covered with the vine, and we know that in many lands vines climb the trees, and cover them. What a vine must that be which ascends the cedars of God, and even overtops them! It is a noble picture of the prosperity of the Israelitish people in their best days. In Solomon's time the little land of Israel occupied a high place among the nations. There have been times when the church of God also has been eminently conspicuous, and her power has been felt far and near.

11. "*She sent out her boughs unto the sea.*" Along the Mediterranean and, perhaps, across its waters, Israel's power was felt. "*And her branches unto the river.*" On her eastern side she pushed her commerce even to the Euphrates. Those were brave days for Israel, and would have continued, had not sin cut them short. When the church pleases the Lord, her influence becomes immense, far beyond the proportion which her numbers or her power would lead us to expect; but, alas! when the Lord leaves her she becomes as worthless, useless, and despised as an untended vine, which is of all plants the most valueless.

12. "*Why hast thou then broken down her hedges?*" Thou hast withdrawn protection from her after caring for her with all this care;—wherefore is this, O Lord? A vine unprotected is exposed to every form of injury: none regard it, all prey upon it: such was Israel when given over to her enemies; such has the church full often been. "*So that all they which pass by the way do pluck her.*" Her cruel neighbours have a pluck at her, and marauding bands, like roaming beasts, must needs pick at her. With God no enemy can harm us, without him none are so weak as to be unable to do us damage.

13. "*The boar out of the wood doth waste it.*" Such creatures are famous for rending and devouring vines. Babylon, like a beast from the marshes of the Euphrates, came up and wasted Judah and Israel. Fierce peoples, comparable to wild swine of the forest, warred with the Jewish nation, until it was gored and torn like a vine destroyed by greedy hogs. "*And the wild beast of the field doth devour it.*" First one foe and then another wreaked vengeance on the nation, neither did God interpose to chase them away. Ruin followed ruin; the fox devoured the young shoots which had been saved from the damage wrought by the boar. Alas, poor land. How low wast thou brought! An oak or cedar might have been crushed by such ravages, but how canst thou endure it, O weak and tender vine? See what evils follow in the train of sin, and how terrible a thing it is for a people to be forsaken of their God.

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14. "*Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts.*" Turn thyself to us as well as us to thee. Thou hast gone from us because of our sins, come back to us, for we sigh and cry after thee. Or, if it be too much to ask thee to come, then do at least give us some consideration and cast an eye upon our griefs. "*Look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine.*" Do not close thine eyes; it is thy vine, do not utterly turn away from it as though it were quite gone from thy mind. Great Husbandman, at least note the mischief which the beasts have done, for then it may be thy heart will pity, and thy hand will be outstretched to deliver.

15. "*And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted.*" Shall all thy care be lost? Thou hast done so much, wilt thou lose thy labour? With thy power and wisdom thou didst great things for thy people, wilt thou now utterly give them up, and suffer thine enemies to exult in the evil which they delight in? "*And the branch that thou madest strong for thyself.*" A prayer for the leader whom the Lord had raised up, or for the Messiah whom they expected. Though the vine had been left, yet one branch had been regarded of the Lord, as if to furnish a scion for another vine; therefore, is the prayer made in this form. Let us pray the Lord, if he will not in the first place look upon his church, to look upon the Lord Jesus, and then behold her in mercy for his sake. This is the true art of prayer, to put Christ forward and cry,

> "Him and then the sinner see,
> Look through Jesus' wounds on me."

16. "*It is burned with fire.*" In broken utterances the sorrowful singer utters his distress. The vineyard was like a forest which has been set on fire; the choice vines were charred and dead. "*It is cut down.*" The cruel axe had hacked after its murderous fashion, the branches were lopped, the trunk was wounded, desolation reigned supreme. "*They perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.*" God's rebuke was to Israel what fire and axe would be to a vine. His favour is life, and his wrath is as messengers of death. One angry glance from Jehovah's eye is sufficient to lay all the vineyards of Ephraim desolate. O Lord, look not thus upon our churches. Rebuke us, but not in anger.

17. "*Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand.*" Let thy power rest on thy true Benjamin, son of thy right hand; give a commission to some chosen man by whom thou wilt deliver. Honour him, save us, and glorify thyself. There is no doubt here an outlook to the Messiah, for whom believing Jews had learned to look as the Saviour in time of trouble. "*Upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.*" Send forth thy power with him whom thou shalt strengthen to accomplish thy purposes of grace. It pleases God to work for the sons of men by sons of men. "By man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead." Nations rise or fall largely through the instrumentality of individuals: by a Napoleon the kingdoms are scourged, and by a Wellington nations are saved from the tyrant. It is by the man Christ Jesus that fallen Israel is yet to rise, and indeed through him, who deigns to call himself the Son of Man, the world is to be delivered from the dominion of Satan and the curse of sin. O Lord, fulfil thy promise to the man of thy right hand, who participates in thy glory, and give him to see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in his hand.

18. "*So will not we go back from thee.*" Under the leadership of one whom God had chosen the nation would be kept faithful, grace would work gratitude, and so cement them to their allegiance. It is in Christ that we abide faithful; because he lives we live also. There is no hope of our perseverance apart from him. "*Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.*" If the Lord gives life out of death, his praise is sure to follow. The Lord Jesus is such a leader, that in him is life, and the life is the light of men. He is our life. When he visits our souls anew we shall be revivified, and our praise shall ascend unto the name of the Triune God.

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19. "*Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts.*" Here we have another advance in the title and the incommunicable name of Jehovah, the I AM is introduced. Faith's day grows brighter as the hours roll on; and her prayers grow more full and mighty. "*Cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.*" Even we who were so destroyed. No extremity is too great for the power of God. He is able to save at the last point, and that too by simply turning his smiling face upon his afflicted. Men can do little with their arm, but God can do all things with a glance. Oh, to live for ever in the light of Jehovah's countenance.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—It is an Asaph-prayer again, full of pleas in Israel's behalf. It is as if they had before them Isaiah lxiii. 11, "Then he remembered the days of old." They call to his mind the days of *Joseph*, when (Gen. xlix. 24) the Lord miraculously fed them in Egypt. And then the *tabernacle days*, when (first, since the days of Eden), the Lord was known to dwell between the cherubim, on the mercy-seat. They call to his mind *wilderness times* (verse 2), when their march was gladdened by his presence, "Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh" looking on the Pillar of Glory as it rose before them, the guide and partner of their way (see Num. x. 32–34) "O God, bring us back again! Cause thy face to shine! and all shall be well again!"—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1.—The prophet does not nakedly begin his prayer, but mingles therewith certain titles, by which he most aptly addresses God, and urges his cause. He does not say, O thou who sustainest and governest all things which are in heaven and in earth, who hast placed thy dwelling-place above the heaven of heavens; but, Thou who art the Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock, thou that dwellest between the cherubims. Those things which enhance the favor and providence of God revealed to Israel, he brings to remembrance that he might nourish and strengthen confidence in prayer. . . . Let us learn from this example to feed and fortify our confidence in praying to God, with the marks of that divine and paternal kindness revealed to us in Christ our Shepherd and propitiation.—*Musculus.*

Verse 1.—"*Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel.*" It is the part of the shepherd to give ear to the bleatings and cries of the sheep, to call them to mind, that he may readily run to their help.—*Venema.*

Verse 1.—"*O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock.*" Yon shepherd is about to lead his flock across the river; and, as our Lord says of the good shepherd, you observe that he goes before, and the sheep follow. Not all in the same manner, however. Some enter boldly, and come straight across. These are the loved ones of the flock, who keep hard by the footsteps of the shepherd, whether sauntering through green meadows, by the still waters, feeding upon the mountains, or resting at noon beneath the shadow of great rocks. And now others enter, but in doubt and alarm. Far from their guide, they miss the ford, and are carried down the river, some more, some less, and yet, one by one, they all struggle over and make good their landing. Notice those little lambs. They refuse to enter, and must be driven into the stream by the shepherd's dog, mentioned by Job in his "parable." Poor things! how they leap and plunge, and bleat in terror! That weak one yonder will be swept quite away, and perish in the sea. But, no; the shepherd himself leaps into the stream, lifts it into his bosom, and bears it trembling to the shore. All safely over, how happy they appear. The lambs frisk and gambol about in high spirits, while the older ones gather round their faithful guide, and look up to him in subdued but expressive thankfulness.

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Now, can you watch such a scene, and not think of that Shepherd who leadeth Joseph like a flock, and of another river which all his sheep must cross? He, too, goes before, and, as in the case of this flock, they who keep near him fear no evil. They hear his sweet voice saying, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." With eye fastened on him, they scarcely see the stream, or feel its cold and threatening waves. The great majority, however, "linger, shivering on the brink, and fear to launch away." They lag behind, look down upon the dark river, and, like Peter on stormy Gennesaret, when faith failed, they begin to sink. Then they cry for help, and not in vain. The Good Shepherd hastens to their rescue, and none of all his flock can ever perish. Even the weakest lambkins are carried safely over. I once saw flocks crossing the Jordan "to Canaan's fair and happy land," and there the scene was even more striking and impressive. The river was broader, the current stronger, and the flocks larger, while the shepherds were more picturesque and Biblical. The catastrophe, too, with which many more sheep were threatened—of being swept down into that mysterious sea of death, which swallows up the Jordan itself,—was more solemn and suggestive.—*W. M. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book."*

Verse 1.—"*Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock.*" Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock art considered by the unbelieving to have no thoughts for our affairs; therefore stretch forth thine hand for our assistance, that the mouth of them that speak iniquities may be shut. We seek not gold and riches, or the dignities of this world, but we long for thy light, we desire more ardently to know thee, therefore "shine forth." —*Savonarola.*

Verse 1.—"*Thou that dwellest between the cherubims.*" From this phrase the following ideas may be derived:—(1) That God is a King, sitting on his throne, and surrounded by his "*ministers.*" His throne is the heavens, the symbol of which is the holy of holies, his "*ministers*" are "*angels,*" and are elsewhere distinguished by that name, as Gen. iii., Ps. xviii., 11; (2) that God is the "*King*" of Israel, dwelling among them by the external symbol of his presence. His most illustrious ministers are depicted by the "*cherubims,*" who comprehend his heavenly as well as earthly ministers; (3) that God is the covenant "*King*" of his people, and has fixed his dwelling-place above the "*ark of the covenant,*" an argument that he will observe the covenant and fulfil its promises, that he will guard his people, and procure for them every felicity; (4) lastly, that God is willing to reveal to the people his *grace* and *mercy* through the covering of the ark, called the "*mercy seat,*" on which God sat.—*Venema.*

Verse 2.—"*Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.*" The three tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, the three sons of Rachel, went immediately behind the ark. Whenever the ark arose against the enemy, Moses used to exclaim, "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." The Psalmist repeats this exclamation. "Cause thy face to shine upon us," was the blessing of Aaron; the psalmist prays for the renewal of that blessing.—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 3.—"*Turn us, and cause thy face to shine.*" To thyself convert us, from the earthly to the heavenly; convert our rebellious wills to thee, and when we are converted, show thy countenance that we may know thee; show thy power that we may fear thee; show thy wisdom that we may reverence thee; show thy goodness that we may love thee; show them once, show them a second time, show them always, that through tribulation we may pass with a happy face, and be saved. When thou dost save, we shall be saved; when thou withdrawest thy hand, we cannot be saved.—*Savonarola.*

Verse 4.—"*Lord God of hosts.*" All creatures are mustered, and trained, and put into garrison, or brought forth into the field, by his command. Which way can we look beside his armies? ? If upward into heaven, there is a

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band of soldiers, even a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, Luke ii. 13. If to the lower heavens, there is a band of soldiers, Gen. ii. 1; it was *universa militia cœli*, to which those idolaters burnt incense. On the earth, not only men are marshalled to the service; so Israel was called the "host of the living God;" but even the brute creatures are ranged in arrays. So God did levy a band of flies against the Egyptians; and a band of frogs that marched into their bedchambers. He hath troops of locusts, Proverbs xxx. 27, and armies of caterpillars. Not only the chariots and horsemen of heaven to defend his prophet; but even the basest, the most indocible, and despicable creatures, wherewith to confound his enemies. If Goliath stalk forth to defy the God of Israel, he shall be confuted with a pebble. If Herod swells up to a god, God will set his vermin on him, and all the king's guard cannot save him from them. You have heard of rats that could not be beaten off till they had destroyed that covetous prelate; and of the fly that killed Pope Adrian. God hath more ways to punish than he hath creatures. "*The Lord God of Hosts*" is not properly a title of creation, but of Providence. All creatures have their existence from God as their Maker; but so have they also their order from him as their Governor. It refers not so much to their being as to their marshalling; not to their natural but militant estate; not only as creatures do they owe him for their making, but as they are soldiers for their managing. Their order is warlike, and they serve under the colors of the Almighty. So that here, God would be respected, not as a creator, but as a general.

His *anger*, therefore, seems so much the more fearful, as it is presented to us under so great a title: "*the Lord God of Hosts*" *is angry*. They talk of Tamerlane that he could daunt his enemies with the very look of his countenance. Oh! then what terror dwells in the countenance of an offended God! The reprobates shall call to the rocks to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. Rev. vi. 16. If *ira agni* doth so affright them, how terrible is *ira leonis*, the wrath of the lion? It may justly trouble us all to hear that the Lord, "*the Lord God of Hosts*," is *angry;* in the sense whereof the prophet breaks forth here into this expostulation: "O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry with thy people that prayeth?"—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 4.—"*Angry against the prayer of thy people.*" There may be infirmities enough in our very prayers to make them unacceptable. As if they be *Exanimes*, without life and soul; when the heart knows not what the tongue utters. Or *Perfunctoriæ*, for God will have none of those prayers that come out of feigned lips. Or *Tentativæ*, for they that will *petere tentando*, tempt God in prayer, shall go without. Or *Fluctuantes*, of a wild and wandering discourse, ranging up and down, which the Apostle calls "beating the air," as huntsmen beat the bushes, and as Saul sought his father's asses. Such prayers will not stumble upon the kingdom of heaven. Or if they be *Preproperæ*, run over in haste, as some use to chop up their prayers, and think long till they have done. But they that pray in such haste shall be heard at leisure. Or *sine fiducia;* the faithless man had as good hold his peace as pray; he may babble, but prays not; he prays ineffectually, and receives not. He may lift up his hands, but he does not lift up his heart. Only the prayer of the righteous availeth, and only the believer is righteous. But the formal devotion of a faithless man is not worth the crust of bread which he asks. Or *sine humilitate*, so the pharisee's prayer was not truly *supplicatio*, but *superlatio*. A presumptuous prayer profanes the name of God instead of adoring it. All, or any, of these defects may mar the success of our prayers.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 5.—"*In great measure.*" The Hebrew *shalish* is the name of a measure, so called of *three*, as containing *a third part of the greatest measure*, four times as big as the usual cup to drink in.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 7.—"*Turn us again, O God of hosts.*" See verse 3 and observe that there it was only, "*Turn us again, O God,*" here "*O God of hosts,*" and verse

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19, "*O Lord God of hosts.*" As the bird by much waving gathereth wind under the wing, and mounteth higher, so doth faith in prayer: *viresque acquirit eundo.*—*John Trapp.*

Verse 7.—Salvation may be certainly expected in God's order; and if we labour to be sure of our turning to God, and living in the sense of communion with him, we need not make question of salvation, for that shall follow infallibly on the former two. "*Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.*" The last is not put up by way of prayer here, but promised to themselves, and put out of question, that it shall follow; "*Turn us, so shall we be saved,*" say they.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt,*" etc. The blessings are here placed before us in figurative language, taken from the *vine*, and the care usually expended upon it. They are, 1. The transplanting of the vine from an unfruitful to a very rich and fertile soil. 2. Its plantation and care. 3. Its incredible fruitfulness derived hence.—*Venema.*

Verses 8—19.—Mant's version of the passage is so exquisite that we quote it in full:—

8 Thy hands from Egypt brought a goodly vine,
And planted fair in fertile Palestine;
9 Clear'd for its grasping roots th' unpeopled land,
And gave it high to rise, and firm to stand.
0 Far o'er the eternal hills her shadow spread,
Her tendrils wreath'd the cedar's towering head;
11 And, as the centre of the land she stood,
Her branches reach'd the sea, her boughs the eastern flood.

12 Why hast thou now her hedges rent away,
And left her bare, the passing traveller's prey?
13 The field-fed beast devours each tender shoot,
Fierce from the wood the boar assails her root.
14 Return, O God; from heaven thine eyes incline;
Behold, and visit this neglected vine:
15 Regard the plant, thou once didst love so well,
And chief thy pleasant branch, the hope of Israel.

16 Burnt though she be and rent, her haughty foe
The deathful terrors of thy wrath shall know.
17 But on the man, by thee with strength array'd,
The Son of Man by thee for conquest made,
18 Thy hand shall rest; till we thy triumph see,
Resound thy praise, and still remember thee.
19 Turn us again, thou God of heav'n's high powers,
Beam with thy radiance forth, and peace shall still be ours.

Verse 10.—"*The hills,*" etc. That the sides of hills are the most commodious places for vineyards, is sufficiently known; as also that the vine hath props on which it climbs, and rests itself, and that these are lower or higher, according to the nature of the several soils or climates. In fertile soils, as now-a-days in Lombardy, the vines run up the *trees* and *cover* them. And so here with respect to the luxuriant growth of this fruitful vine, it may not unfitly be said, in the poetical style, to run up to and reach the tops of the tall "*cedars,*" as Joseph is said to be "a fruitful bough, whose branches run over the wall," Gen. xlix., 22.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 12.—"*Why hast thou then broken down her hedges?*" Why hast thou done this, O Lord? What is the advantage? The guard of angels thou hast removed; they used to ward off the robbers; they used to defend it. Where, to-day, is this faithful guard? Where are the prophets? Where the apostles? Where the teachers? Where the pastors surrounding the vine? Casting out devils, excommunicating heretics, arresting perverse men, and guarding the imperfect. What is the hedge? The guard of angels, the defence of pastors,

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the sacred doctrine of preachers. Where is the hedge? It is destroyed. Who has destroyed it? Thou, O Lord, who hast taken away the preachers, gathered the pastors into heaven, removed the angels. Why hast thou cast down her hedges? Was it that she might fill up her iniquities, complete the measure of her wickedness, that at length she might be punished and renovated? But what was wanting to her? What sin was not found in her? Behold, Lord, for her wickedness is full. And now they gather her grapes, even all who go out of the way. Not the true vine-dressers, not the true husbandmen, gather her grapes, not all good, not a few good, not partly good and partly bad, not even one good, but all who pass beyond the way, pluck her. All who keep not thy precepts, who know not the way of God, open sinners, disreputable, these are the men that are chosen to minister at the altar, to these are benefices given, these gather her grapes for themselves, not for thee. They regard not thy poor; they feed not the hungry; they clothe not the naked; they help not the stranger; they defend not the widow and orphan; they eat up the lamb of the flock, and the fatted calf from the midst of the herd. They sing to the sound of psaltery and organ, like David; they think they have the instruments of song, arranged in choirs, praising God with the lips, but in heart they are far from God. Drinking wine in cups, perfumed with the richest odours, they suffer nothing for the grief of Joseph; with no pity are they moved for the needy and poor. These, then, are the men who go out of thy way and gather the grapes of thy vine. But what shall I say, Lord? For even all who transgress thy way, gather thy vintage? Walking in thy way and seeing the hedge of thy vine broken down, they have gone out of thy way. They have not walked in a straight course, but leaving thy way, have turned their feet to thy vine, to pluck her, to gather her fruit, not the spiritual fruit, but the temporal. What is it you say? This I say, Lord: The rich men of this world walking in the way of their sins, seeking by thy will and against thy will the riches, honours, dignities, and pleasures of this world, have turned aside from thy ways. The riches of this world they have ceased to pursue; its honours they seek no longer; they are turned to thy vine, to ecclesiastical dignities and riches. The hedge is broken down which repelled the unworthy, and now even they who go out of thy way have entered, and gather her grapes. What is your indictment? This: To-day in the theatre, to-morrow in the bishop's chair. To-day at the custom-house, to-morrow a canon in the choir. To-day a soldier, to-morrow a priest. They have transgressed thy way, and turned to thy vine: not, indeed, that they might cultivate her for thee, but that they might gather her grapes for themselves.—*Savonarola.*

Verse 13.—"*The boar out of the wood doth waste it.*" The very boar that laid her waste is a singular wild beast. Singular, because proud. For thus saith every proud one, It is I, it is I, and no other.—*Augustine.*

Verse 13.—"*The boar out of the wood doth waste it.*" No image of a destructive enemy could be more appropriate than that which is used. We have read of the little foxes that spoil the vines, but the *wild boar* is a much more destructive enemy, breaking its way through fences, rooting up the ground, tearing down the vines themselves, and treading them under its feet. A single party of these animals will sometimes destroy an entire vineyard in a single night. We can well imagine the damage that would be done to a vineyard even by the domesticated swine, but the wild boar is infinitely more destructive. It is of very great size, often resembling a donkey rather than a boar, and is swift and active beyond conception. The wild boar is scarcely recognizable as the very near relation of the domestic species. It runs with such speed, that a high-bred horse finds some difficulty in overtaking it, while an indifferent steed would be left hopelessly behind. Even on level ground the hunter has hard work to overtake it; and if it can get upon broken or hilly ground, no horse can catch it. The wild boar can leap to a considerable distance, and can wheel and turn when at full speed, with an agility that makes it a singularly dangerous foe.

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Indeed, the inhabitants of countries where the wild boar flourishes would as soon face a lion as one of these animals, the stroke of whose razor-like tusks is made with lightning swiftness, and which is sufficient to rip up a horse, and cut a dog nearly asunder.—*J. G. Wood, in "Bible Animals."* 1869.

Verse 13.—"*The boar.*"

> In vengeance of neglected sacrifice,
> On Æneus' fields she sent a monstrous boar,
> That levell'd harvests and whole forests tore.
> —*Pope's Homer's Iliad.*

Verse 13.—"*The wood.*" Or rather *marsh;* that is, a moist marshy piece of ground, where trees and plants flourish, and which wild beasts delight in. Such is the neighbourhood of the river Jordan, thus described by Maundrell: "After having descended the outermost bank, you go about a furlong upon a level strand, before you come to the immediate bank of the river. The second bank is so beset with bushes and trees, such as tamarisks, willows, oleanders, and the like, that you can see no water till you have made your way through them. In this thicket anciently (and the same is reported of it to this day), several sorts of wild beasts were wont to harbour themselves." . . . . In these places, according to the same author, live many wild boars. Bp. Pococke in particular observed very large herds of them on the other side of Jordan, where it flows out of the Sea of Tiberias; and several of them on the same side on which he was, lying among the reeds by the sea.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 13.—According to the Talmud, the middle letter of the word rendered "*wood,*" in this verse, is the middle letter of the Hebrew Psalter.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 14.—"*Look down from heaven, and behold.*" This prayer is fit for none but the truly contrite, and those who are in heart returning. Otherwise, with what conscience could we entreat God to look down from heaven and behold our affairs? Should we not inflame his anger all the more, if, besides living in sin, we dared to challenge the all holy eyes of God to behold from heaven our wickedness?—*Musculus.*

Verse 14.—"*Look down from heaven.*" Thou hast gone far from us, thou hast ascended to heaven. Thou hast departed from us, look down at least upon us from heaven, if thou art not willing to descend to earth, if our sins do not merit this—*Savonarola.*

Verse 14.—"*Visit this vine.*" Still it has roots, still some branches are living. In the beginning of the world it began, and never has failed, and never will. For thou hast said, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. It may be diminished, it can never utterly fail. This vine is the vine which thou hast planted. There is one spirit, one faith, one baptism, one God, and Lord of all, who is all in all. Visit, then, this vine, for thy visitation preserves her spirit; visit by thy grace, by thy presence, by thy Holy Spirit. Visit with thy rod, and with thy staff; for thy rod and thy staff comfort her. Visit with thy scourge that she may be chastened and purified, for the time of pruning comes. Cast out the stones, gather up the dry branches, and bind them in bundles for burning. Raise her up, cut off the superfluous shoots, make fast her supports, enrich the soil, build up the fence, and visit this vine, as now thou visitest the earth and waterest it.—*Savonarola.*

Verse 17.—"*Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand,*" etc. Neither the church, nor any member thereof needeth any more security for their stability and perpetuation, but Christ; for now when the vineyard is burnt, and the visible church defaced, the remnant are content to rest satisfied with this, which also they take for granted, and do subscribe unto it: "*Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.*" The consanguinity of Christ with the believer, and his humiliation in his human nature, are strong supporters of the faith and comfort of his

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people that do seek salvation through him; therefore do the faithful here fix themselves on this, that as he is God's Son, so he is a branch of their vineyard also; that as he is at the right hand of the Father as God, so he is "*the man of his right hand*" also; the Son of Man, or of *Adam*, partaker of flesh and blood with us, of the same stock that we are of, in all things like to us, except sin; for the *Son of Man* is the style whereby Christ styled himself in his humiliation. The perpetuity of the church, and the perseverance of the saints, is founded upon the sufficiency of Christ; and the unfeigned believer may assure himself, as of the continuance of the church, so of his own perseverance and constant communion with God through him. "*Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand*," etc.; "*so will not we go back from thee.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 17.—"*The man of thy right hand.*" "*The Son of Man.*" These striking expressions apply in the fullest and most perfect sense to Christ. If *the Man of God's right hand* be the man placed there, to whom can the title apply but to him? for, "to which of the angels said God at any time, Sit on my right hand?" (Heb. i. 5); and much less has he said this of any Jewish king. As to the other appellation, *The Son of Man*, it is one of Christ's most definite titles, being given to him in Scripture no less than seventy-one times; in sixty-seven instances by himself; once by Daniel; once by the martyr Stephen; and twice by the Apostle John in the Revelation. He it is, too, whom the Father has made strong for the salvation of his church, and who will yet turn away captivity from the chosen people, and restore them to a place in the church, so that henceforth they "*will not go back from God.*"—*Editorial Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 17.—"*The man of thy right hand.*" The man of the right hand is, I. *Most dear*, whom one holds equally dear with his own right hand, Matt. v. 29, 30. Jacob called the son of his most beloved wife, Benjamin, the son of his right hand, Gen. xxxv. 18, who was so dear to him that his life was bound up in the lad's life, chap. xliv. 30. II. *Most honoured;* a man upon whom one wishes to confer the highest honour, is placed at the right hand as Solomon placed his mother, 1 Kings ii. 19, and the spouse stands at the right hand, Ps. xlv. 10. Sitting down at the right hand is in Scripture a proof of the greatest honour. III. *Allied*, because covenants and mutual agreements are ratified by giving the right hand, 2 Kings x. 15. Jehu said to Jehonadab, *Is thy heart right?* and Jehonadab answered, *It is. If it be, give me thine hand. And he gave him his hand.* The right hand used to be given, as in Gal. ii. 9. *The man of God's right hand*, therefore, is one most dear to God, most honoured and joined with him in covenant.—*James Alting.* 1618—1679.

Verse 17.—Though the phrase, "*man of thy right hand*," may have an immediate reference to the King who ruled in Judah when this psalm was penned, it must ultimately and most properly intend Jesus Christ, the great antitype of all the kings of David's line. The New Testament is the best interpreter of the Old; and it assures us that this highly dignified man is the Son of God. Heb. i. 1, 3, 13. But if we would understand the genuine import of the phrase, we must attend to a custom which obtained in Judea and other eastern countries. At meals, the master of the feast placed the person whom he loved best on his right hand, as a token of love and respect; and as they sat on couches, in the intervals between the dishes, when the master leaned on his left elbow, the man at his right hand, leaning also on his, would naturally repose his head on the master's bosom, while at the same time the master laid his right hand on the favourite's shoulder or side, in testimony of his favourable regards. This custom is obviously referred to in John xxi. 20, where John is called "the disciple whom Jesus loved, who also leaned on his breast at supper." Now, since Christ is called *the man of God's right hand*, this says that he is the object of his warmest and most honourable regards. In him he is well pleased, and in token of this, he has set him in the most honourable place. He is the Son of Man, whom the Father made to stand strong for himself, *i.e.*, to support the honour and dignity of the divine character amidst a perverse and crooked generation: the consideration

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of the Father's right hand being upon him, or of the Father's satisfaction in him as our Surety, serves to animate and embolden our addresses to his throne, and is the keenest incitement to put in practice that resolution, "*Henceforth will we not go back from thee.*"—*Alexander Pirie.*

Verse 18.—"*So will not we,*" etc. How are we to understand the connection between this and the preceding words? It may be understood two ways. 1. *As it would oblige them to the yielding of steadfast obedience;* it would lay them under a special engagement never to revolt any more, as they had done; if God would grant this request, it would be a most eminent tie and bond upon them to the most constant and faithful service. 2. *As it would enable them to yield such obedience.* And this I conceive to be chiefly aimed at; if God would lay such help upon Christ for them, they should receive power by that means to discharge their duty to him better than ever heretofore; though they were very feeble and wavering, false and treacherous of themselves, yet here would be a successful remedy.—*Timothy Cruso.*

Verse 19.—"*Turn us again.*" How well that we can look to God when our face is set wrong, that he may turn us, and so his face shine on us, as to bring blessing and present deliverance to his people.—*J. N. Darby.*

Verse 19.—During distress God comes; and when he comes it is no more distress.—*Gaelic Proverb.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—In what respects the Lord acted as a Shepherd to Israel, as illustrative of his dealings with his Church.

Verse 2.—Salvation expected in connection with the people of God, their prayers, labours, and daily service.

Verse 3.—The double work in salvation, (1) Turn us; (2) Turn to us.

Verse 4.—What prayers they are which make God angry.

Verse 5.—Unpalatable provender. I. Analyse the Provision. II. Note the hand which sends it. III. Consider the healthfulness of the diet. IV. Remember the alleviating accompaniments.

Verse 7.—Conversion, communion, confidence of salvation.

Verses 8—15.—Parallel between the Church and a vine.

Verse 12.—I. The hedges of the Church. II. Their removal. III. The deplorable consequences.

Verse 13.—What are the greatest enemies of the Church? Where do they come from? How shall we defeat them?

Verses 17, 18.—The power of God seen in Jesus, the cause of the perseverance of the saints.

Verse 18 (*last clauses.*)—The need of quickening in order to acceptable worship.

WORKS ON THE EIGHTIETH PSALM.

Hieronymi Savonarolæ Ferrariensis Meditationes in Psalmos—Miserere—In Te Domine Speravi, et Qui Regis Israel [12mo. Leyden: 1633].

A Few Words on the Eightieth Psalm. By CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH. 1835.

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PSALM LXXXI.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician upon Gittith. *Very little is known of the meaning of this title. We have given the best explanation known to us in connection with Psalm VIII. in Vol. I. of this work. If it be intended to indicate a vintage song, it speaks well for the piety of the people for whom it was written; it is to be feared that in few places even in Christian countries would holy hymns be thought suitable to be sung in connection with the wine-press. When the bells upon the horses shall be holiness unto the Lord, then shall the juice of the grape gush forth to the accompaniment of sacred song.* A Psalm of Asaph. *This poet here again dwells upon the history of his country; his great forte seems to be rehearsing the past in admonitory psalmody. He is the poet of the history and politics of Israel. A truly national songster, at once pious and patriotic.*

DIVISIONS.—*Praise is called for to celebrate some memorable day, perhaps the passover; whereupon the deliverance out of Egypt is described,* 1—7. *Then the Lord gently chides his people for their ingratitude, and pictures their happy estate had they but been obedient to his commands.*

EXPOSITION.

SING aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.

2 Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.

3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.

4 For this *was* a statute for Israel, *and* a law of the God of Jacob.

5 This he ordained in Joseph *for* a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: *where* I heard a language *that* I understood not.

6 I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots.

7 Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.

1. "*Sing*" in tune and measure, so that the public praise may be in harmony; sing with joyful notes, and sounds melodious. "*Aloud.*" For the heartiest praise is due to our good Lord. His acts of love to us speak more loudly than any of our words of gratitude can do. No dulness should ever stupify our psalmody, or half-heartedness cause it to limp along. Sing aloud, ye debtors to sovereign grace, your hearts are profoundly grateful: let your voices express your thankfulness. "*Unto God our strength.*" The Lord was the strength of his people in delivering them out of Egypt with a high hand, and also in sustaining them in the wilderness, placing them in Canaan, preserving them from their foes, and giving them victory. To whom do men give honour but to those upon whom they rely, therefore let us sing aloud unto our God, who is our strength and our song. "*Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.*" The God of the nation, the God of their father Jacob, was extolled in gladsome music by the Israelitish people; let no Christian be silent, or slack

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in praise, for this God is our God. It is to be regretted that the niceties of modern singing frighten our congregations from joining lustily in the hymns. For our part we delight in full bursts of praise, and had rather discover the ruggedness of a want of musical training than miss the heartiness of universal congregational song. The gentility which lisps the tune in wellbred whispers, or leaves the singing altogether to the choir, is very like a mockery of worship. The gods of Greece and Rome may be worshipped well enough with classical music, but Jehovah can only be adored with the heart, and that music is the best for his service which gives the heart most play.

2. "*Take a psalm.*" Select a sacred song, and then raise it with your hearty voices. "*And bring hither the timbrel.*" Beat on your tambourines, ye damsels, let the sound be loud and inspiriting. "Sound the trumpets, beat the drums." God is not to be served with misery but with mirthful music, sound ye then the loud timbrel, as of old ye smote it by "Egypt's dark sea." "*The pleasant harp with the psaltery.*" The timbrel for sound, must be joined by the harp for sweetness, and this by other stringed instruments for variety. Let the full compass of music be holiness unto the Lord.

3. "*Blow up the trumpet in the new moon.*" Announce the sacred month, the beginning of months, when the Lord brought his people out of the house of bondage. Clear and shrill let the summons be which calls all Israel to adore the Redeeming Lord. "*In the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.*" Obedience is to direct our worship, not whim and sentiment: God's appointment gives a solemnity to rites and times which no ceremonial pomp or hierarchical ordinance could confer. The Jews not only observed the ordained month, but that part of the month which had been divinely set apart. The Lord's people in the olden time welcomed the times appointed for worship; let us feel the same exultation, and never speak of the Sabbath as though it could be other than "a delight" and "honourable." Those who plead this passage as authority for their man-appointed feasts and fasts must be moonstruck. We will keep such feasts as the Lord appoints, but not those which Rome or Canterbury may ordain.

4. "*For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob.*" It was a precept binding upon all the tribes that a sacred season should be set apart to commemorate the Lord's mercy; and truly it was but the Lord's due, he had a right and a claim to such special homage. When it can be proved that the observance of Christmas, Whitsuntide, and other Popish festivals was ever instituted by a divine statute, we also will attend to them, but not till then. It is as much our duty to reject the traditions of men, as to observe the ordinances of the Lord. We ask concerning every rite and rubric, "Is this a law of the God of Jacob?" and if it be not clearly so, it is of no authority with us, who walk in Christian liberty.

5. "*This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony.*" The nation is called Joseph, because in Egypt it would probably be known and spoken of as Joseph's family, and indeed Joseph was the foster-father of the people. The passover, which is probably here alluded to, was to be a standing memorial of the redemption from Egypt; and everything about it was intended to testify to all ages, and all peoples, the glory of the Lord in the deliverance of his chosen nation. "*When he went out through the land of Egypt.*" Much of Egypt was traversed by the tribes in their exodus march, and in every place the feast which they had kept during the night of Egypt's visitation would be a testimony for the Lord, who had also himself in the midnight slaughter gone forth through the land of Egypt. The once afflicted Israelites marched over the land of bondage as victors who trample down the slain. "*Where I heard a language that I understood not.*' Surely the connection requires that we accept these words as the language of the Lord. It would be doing great violence to language if the "I" here should be referred to one person, and the "I" in the next verse to another. But how can it be imagined that the Lord should speak of a language which he understood not, seeing he knows all things,

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and no form of speech is incomprehensible to him? The reply is, that the Lord here speaks as the God of Israel identifying himself with his own chosen nation, and calling that an unknown tongue to himself which was unknown to them. He had never been adored by psalm or prayer in the tongue of Egypt; the Hebrew was the speech known in his sacred house, and the Egyptian was outlandish and foreign there. In strictest truth, and not merely in figure, might the Lord thus speak, since the wicked customs and idolatrous rites of Egypt were disapproved of by him, and in that sense were unknown. Of the wicked, Jesus shall say, "I never knew you;" and probably in the same sense this expression should be understood, for it may be correctly rendered, "a speech I knew not I am hearing." It was among the griefs of Israel that their taskmasters spake an unknown tongue, and they were thus continually reminded that they were strangers in a strange land. The Lord had pity upon them, and emancipated them, and hence it was their bounden duty to maintain inviolate the memorial of the divine goodness. It is no small mercy to be brought out from an ungodly world and separated unto the Lord.

6. "*I removed his shoulder from the burden.*" Israel was the drudge and slave of Egypt, but God gave him liberty. It was by God alone that the nation was set free. Other peoples owe their liberties to their own efforts and courage, but Israel received its Magna Charta as a free gift of divine power. Truly may the Lord say of everyone of his freed men, "I removed his shoulder from the burden." "*His hands were delivered from the pots.*" He was no longer compelled to carry earth, and mould it, and bake it; the earth-basket was no more imposed upon the people, nor the tale of bricks exacted, for they came out into the open country where none could exact upon them. How typical all this is of the believer's deliverance from legal bondage, when, through faith, the burden of sin glides into the Saviour's sepulchre, and the servile labours of self-righteousness come to an end for ever.

7. "*Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee.*" God heard his people's cries in Egypt, and at the Red Sea: this ought to have bound them to him. Since God does not forsake us in our need, we ought never to forsake him at any time. When our hearts wander from God, our answered prayers cry "shame" upon us. "*I answered thee in the secret place of thunder.*" Out of the cloud the Lord sent forth tempest upon the foes of his chosen. That cloud was his secret pavilion, within it he hung up his weapons of war, his javelins of lightning, his trumpet of thunder; forth from that pavilion he came and overthrew the foe that his own elect might be secure. "*I proved thee at the waters of Meribah.*" They had proved him and found him faithful, he afterwards proved them in return. Precious things are tested, therefore Israel's loyalty to her King was put to trial, and, alas, it failed lamentably. The God who was adored one day for his goodness was reviled the next, when the people for a moment felt the pangs of hunger and thirst. The story of Israel is only our own history in another shape. God has heard us, delivered us, liberated us, and too often our unbelief makes the wretched return of mistrust, murmuring, and rebellion. Great is our sin; great is the mercy of our God: let us reflect upon both, and pause a while. "*Selah.*" Hurried reading is of little benefit; to sit down a while and meditate is very profitable.

8 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me;

9 There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god.

10 I *am* the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.

11 But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.

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12 So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: *and* they walked in their own counsels.

13 Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, *and* Israel had walked in my ways!

14 I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.

15 The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever.

16 He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

8. "*Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee.*" What? Are the people so insensible as to be deaf to their God? So it would seem, for he earnestly asks a hearing. Are we not also at times quite as careless and immovable? "*O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me.*" There is much in this "if." How low have they fallen who will not hearken unto God himself! The deaf adder is not more grovelling. We are not fond of being upbraided, we had rather avoid sharp and cutting truths; and, though the Lord himself rebuke us, we fly from his gentle reproofs.

9. "*There shall no strange god be in thee.*" No alien god is to be tolerated in Israel's tents. "*Neither shalt thou worship any strange god.*" Where false gods are, their worship is sure to follow. Man is so desperate an idolater that the image is always a strong temptation: while the nests are there the birds will be eager to return. No other god had done anything for the Jews, and therefore they had no reason for paying homage to any other. To us the same argument will apply. We owe all to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: the world, the flesh, the devil, none of these have been of any service to us; they are aliens, foreigners, enemies, and it is not for us to bow down before them. "Little children keep yourselves from idols," is our Lord's voice to us, and by the power of his Spirit we would cast out every false god from our hearts.

10. "*I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt.*" Thus did Jehovah usually introduce himself to his people. The great deliverance out of Egypt was that claim upon his people's allegiance which he most usually pleaded. If ever people were morally bound to their God, certainly Israel was a thousand times pledged unto Jehovah, by his marvellous deeds on their behalf in connection with the Exodus. "*Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.*" Because he had brought them out of Egypt he could do great things for them. He had proved his power and his good will; it remained only for his people to believe in him and ask large things of him. If their expectations were enlarged to the utmost degree, they could not exceed the bounty of the Lord. Little birds in the nest open their mouths widely enough, and perhaps the parent birds fail to fill them, but it will never be so with our God. His treasures of grace are inexhaustible,

> "Deep as our helpless miseries are,
> And boundless as our sins."

The Lord began with his chosen nation upon a great scale, doing great wonders for them, and offering them vast returns for their faith and love, if they would but be faithful to him. Sad, indeed, was the result of this grand experiment.

11. "*But my people would not hearken to my voice.*" His warnings were rejected, his promises forgotten, his precepts disregarded. Though the divine voice proposed nothing but good to them, and that upon an unparalleled scale of liberality, yet they turned aside. "*And Israel would none of me.*" They would not consent to his proposals, they walked in direct opposition to his commands, they hankered after the ox-god of Egypt, and their hearts were bewitched by

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the idols of the nations round about. The same spirit of apostacy is in all our hearts, and if we have not altogether turned aside from the Lord, it is only grace which has prevented us.

12. "*So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust.*" No punishment is more just or more severe than this. If men will not be checked, but madly take the bit between their teeth and refuse obedience, who shall wonder if the reins are thrown upon their necks, and they are let alone to work out their own destruction. It were better to be given up to lions than to our hearts' lusts. "*And they walked in their own counsels.*" There was no doubt as to what course they would take, for man is everywhere wilful and loves his own way,—that way being at all times in direct opposition to God's way. Men deserted of restraining grace, sin with deliberation; they consult, and debate, and consider, and then elect evil rather than good, with malice aforethought and in cool blood. It is a remarkable obduracy of rebellion when men not only run into sin through passion, but calmly "walk in their own counsels" of iniquity.

13. "*O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!*" The condescending love of God expresses itself in painful regrets for Israel's sin and punishment. Such were the laments of Jesus over Jerusalem. Certain doctrinalists find a stumbling-stone in such passages, and set themselves to explain them away, but to men in sympathy with the divine nature the words and the emotions are plain enough. A God of mercy cannot see men heaping up sorrow for themselves through their sins without feeling his compassion excited toward them.

14. "*I should soon have subdued their enemies.*" As he did in Egypt overthrow Pharaoh, so would he have baffled every enemy. "*And turned my hand against their adversaries.*" He would have smitten them once, and then have dealt them a return blow with the back of his hand. See what we lose by sin. Our enemies find the sharpest weapons against us in the armoury of our transgressions. They could never overthrow us if we did not first overthrow ourselves. Sin strips a man of his armour, and leaves him naked to his enemies. Our doubts and fears would long ago have been slain if we had been more faithful to our God. Ten thousand evils which afflict us now would have been driven far from us if we had been more jealous of holiness in our walk and conversation. We ought to consider not only what sin takes from our present stock, but what it prevents our gaining: reflection will soon show us that sin always costs us dear. If we depart from God, our inward corruptions are sure to make a rebellion. Satan will assail us, the world will worry us, doubts will annoy us, and all through our own fault. Solomon's departure from God raised up enemies against him, and it will be so with us, but if our ways please the Lord he will make even our enemies to be at peace with us.

15. "*The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him.*" Though the submission would have been false and flattering, yet the enemies of Israel would have been so humiliated that they would have hastened to make terms with the favoured tribes. Our enemies become abashed and cowardly when we, with resolution, walk carefully with the Lord. It is in God's power to keep the fiercest in check, and he will do so if we have a filial fear, a pious awe of him. "*But their time should have endured for ever.*" The people would have been firmly established, and their prosperity would have been stable. Nothing confirms a state or a church like holiness. If we be firm in obedience we shall be firm in happiness. Righteousness establishes, sin ruins.

16. "*He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat.*" Famine would have been an unknown word, they would have been fed on the best of the best food, and have had abundance of it as their every day diet. "*And with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.*" Luxuries as well as necessaries would be forthcoming, the very rocks of the land would yield abundant and sweet supplies; the bees would store the clefts of the rocks with luscious honey, and so turn the most sterile part of the land to good account. The Lord can do great things for an obedient people. When his people walk in the light of

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his countenance, and maintain unsullied holiness, the joy and consolation which he yields them are beyond conception. To them the joys of heaven have begun even upon earth. They can sing in the ways of the Lord. The spring of the eternal summer has commenced with them; they are already blest, and they look for brighter things. This shows us by contrast how sad a thing it is for a child of God to sell himself into captivity to sin, and bring his soul into a state of famine by following after another god.

O Lord, for ever bind us to thyself alone, and keep us faithful unto the end.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—It is remarkable that as Psalm lxxx. treats of the church of God under the figure of a vine, so the present is entitled, "*upon Gittith*," literally upon the winepress. Whether the expression was meant to refer to a musical instrument, or to some direction as to the tune, is uncertain. In our Saviour's adoption of the figure of a vineyard to represent his church, he speaks of a winepress dug in it, Matt. xxi. 33. The idea refers itself to the final result in some sense, in a way of salvation of souls, as the same figure of a winepress is used in Rev. xiv. of the final destruction of the ungodly.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 2.—"*Timbrel.*" The *toph*, English version *tabret*, *timbrel*, LXX., τύμπανον, once ψαλτήριον. It was what would now be called a tambourine, being played by the hand; and was specially used by women. It is thrice mentioned in the Psalms: lxxxi. 2; cxlix. 3; cl. 4.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 2.—"*The Psaltery.*" It is probably impossible to be sure as to what is intended by a psaltery. The Genevan version translates it *viol*, and the ancient viol was a six-stringed guitar. In the Prayer-book version, the Hebrew word is rendered *lute*, which instrument resembled the guitar, but was superior in tone. The Greek word psalterion denotes a stringed instrument played with the fingers. Cassiodorus says that the psaltery was triangular in shape, and that it was played with a bow. Aben Ezra evidently considered it to be a kind of pipe, but the mass of authorities make it a stringed instrument. It was long in use, for we read of it in David's time as made of fir-wood (2 Sam. vi. 5), and in Solomon's reign, of algum trees (2 Chr. ix. 11), and it was still in use in the days of Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 3.—"*Blow up the trumpet,*" etc. The Jews say this blowing of trumpets was in commemoration of Isaac's deliverance, a ram being sacrificed for him, and therefore they sounded with trumpets made of ram's horns: or in remembrance of the trumpet blown at the giving of the law; though it rather was an emblem of the gospel and the ministry of it, by which sinners are aroused, awakened and quickened, and souls are charmed and allured, and filled with spiritual joy and gladness.—*John Gill.*

Verse 3.—"*The trumpet.*" The sound of the trumpet is very commonly employed in Scripture as an image of the voice or word of God. The voice of God, and the voice of the trumpet on Mount Sinai, were heard together (Ex. xix. 5, 18, 19), first the trumpet-sound as the symbol, then the reality. So also John heard the voice of the Lord as that of a trumpet (Rev. i. 10; iv. 1), and the sound of the trumpet is once and again spoken of as the harbinger of the Son of Man, when coming in power and great glory, to utter the almighty word which shall quicken the dead to life, and make all things new (Matthew xxiv. 31; 1 Cor. xv. 52; 1 Thess. iv. 16). The sound of the trumpet, then, was a symbol of the majestic, omnipotent voice or word of God; but of course only in those things in which it was employed in respect to what God

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had to say to men. It might be used also as from man to God, or by the people, as from one to another. In this case, it would be a call to a greater than the usual degree of alacrity and excitement in regard to the work and service of God. And such probably was the more peculiar design of the blowing of trumpets at the festivals generally, and especially at the festival of trumpets on the first day of the second month.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 3.—"*In the new moon,*" etc. The feast of the *new moon* was always proclaimed by sound of trumpet. For want of astronomical knowledge, the poor Jews were put to sad shifts to know the real time of the new moon. They generally sent persons to the top of some hill or mountain about the time which, according to their supputations, the new moon should appear. The first who saw it was to give immediate notice to the Sanhedrim; they closely examined the reporter as to his credibility, and whether his information agreed with their calculations. If all was found satisfactory, the president proclaimed the new moon by shouting out, מקדש, *mikkodesh!* "It is consecrated." This word was repeated *twice* aloud by the people; and was then proclaimed everywhere by *blowing of horns*, or what is called the sound of *trumpets*. Among the Hindoos some feasts are announced by the sound of the *conch*, or *sacred shell.*—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 3.—"*In the time appointed.*" The word rendered "*the time appointed,*" signifies the *hidden* or *covered* period; that is, the time when the moon is concealed or covered with darkness. This day was a joyful festival, returning every month; but the first day of the seventh moon was the most solemn of the whole; being not only the first of the moon, but of the civil year. This was called the feast of trumpets, as it was celebrated by the blowing of trumpets from sun-rising to sun-setting; according to the command, "It shall be a day of the blowing of trumpets to you."

This joy was a memorial of the joy of creation, and the joy of giving the law; it also pre-indicated the blowing of the gospel-trumpet, after the dark, the covered period of the death of Christ, when the form of the church changed, and the year of the "redeemed" began; and, finally, it prefigured the last day, when the trumpet of God shall sound, and the dead shall be raised.—*Alexander Pirie.*

Verse 5.—"*I heard a language that I understood not.*" The "*language*" that he then heard—the religious worship of idolaters,—vows offered up "to birds and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things," Rom. i. 23, and strength and mercy sought from every object in nature, *except himself*,—was a language unknown to him—"he knew it not."—*William Hill Tucker.*

Verse 6.—"*Pots,*" or *burden-baskets.* Compare Exodus vi. 6, 7. Rosellini gives a drawing of these baskets from a picture discovered in a tomb at Thebes. "Of the labourers," says he, "some are employed in transporting the clay in vessels, some in intermingling it with straw; others are taking the bricks out of the form, and placing them in rows; still others with a piece of wood upon their backs, and ropes on each side, carry away the bricks already burned or dried. Their dissimilarity to the Egyptians appears at the first view: their complexion, physiognomy and beard permit us not to be mistaken in supposing them to be Hebrews."—*Frederic Fysh.*

Verse 6.—"*Pots.*" The bricklayer's baskets; hanging one at each end of a yoke laid across the shoulders.—*William Kay.*

Verse 7.—To "*answer in the secret place of thunder,*" refers us to the pillar of cloud and fire, the habitation of the awful Majesty of God, whence God glanced with angry eyes upon the Egyptians, filled them with consternation and overthrew them.—*Venema.*

Verse 10.—"*Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.*" Surely this teaches us,

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that the greater and more valuable the blessings are which we implore from the divine beneficence, the more sure shall we be to receive them in answer to prayer. . . . But, though men are to be blamed, that they so seldom acknowledge God in any thing, yet they are still more to be blamed, that they seek not from him the chief good. Men may, however, possibly cry to God for inferior things, and apply in vain. Even good men may ask for temporal blessings, and not receive them; because the things we suppose good, may *not* be good, or not good *for us*, or not good for us *at present*. But none shall seek God for the best of blessings in vain. If we ask *enough*, we shall have it.

While the worldling drinks in happiness, if it will bear the name, with the mouth of an insect, the Christian imbibes bliss with the mouth of an angel. His pleasures are the same in kind, with the pleasure of the infinitely happy God.—*John Ryland.*

Verse 10.—"*Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.*" You may easily over-expect the creature, but you cannot over-expect God: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;" widen and dilate the desires and expectations of your souls, and God is able to fill every chink to the vastest capacity. This honours God, when we greaten our expectation upon him; it is a sanctifying of God in our hearts.—*Thomas Case* (1598—1682), *in* "*Morning Exercises.*"

Verse 10.—"*Open thy mouth wide.*" This implies, 1. Warmth and fervency in prayer. To open the mouth is in effect to open the heart, that it may be both engaged and enlarged. . . . We may be said to open our mouths wide when our affections are quick and lively, and there is a correspondence between the feelings of the heart and the request of the lips; or when we really pray, and not merely seem to do so. This is strongly and beautifully expressed in Psalm cxix. 131: "I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments." . . . 2. It implies a holy fluency and copiousness of expression, so as to order our cause before him, and fill our mouths with arguments. When the good man gets near to God, he has much business to transact with him, many complaints to make, and many blessings to implore; and, as such seasons do not frequently occur, he's the more careful to improve them. He then pours out his whole soul, and is at no loss for words; for when the heart is full, the tongue overflows. Sorrow and distress will even make those eloquent who are naturally slow of speech. . . . 3. Enlarged hope and expectation. We may be too irreverent in our approaches to God, and too peremptory in our application; but if the matter and manner of our prayer be right, we cannot be too confident in our expectations from him. . . . Open thy mouth wide then, O Christian; stretch out thy desires to the uttermost, grasp heaven and earth in thy boundless wishes, and believe there is enough in God to afford thee full satisfaction Not only come, but come with boldness to the throne of grace: it is erected for sinners, even the chief of sinners. Come to it then, and wait at it, till you obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Those who expect most from God are likely to receive the most. The desire of the righteous, let it be ever so extensive, shall be granted.—*Benjamin Beddome.*

Verse 10.—"*I will fill it.*" Consider the import of the promise: "Open thy mouth wide, *and I will fill it.*" "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find." Particularly, 1. If we open our mouths to God in prayer, he will fill them more and more with suitable petitions and arguments. When we attempt to open the mouth, God will open it still wider. Thus he dealt with Abraham when he interceded for Sodom; the longer he prayed, the more submissive and yet the more importunate he became. By praying we increase our ability to pray, and find a greater facility in the duty. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly." 2. God will fill the mouth with abundant thanksgivings. Many of David's psalms begin with prayer, and end with the most animated praises. No mercies so dispose to thankfulness as those which are received in answer to prayer; for according to the degree of desire will be the sweetness of fruition. . . . . 3. We shall be filled with those blessings

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we pray for, if they are calculated to promote our real good and the glory of God. Do we desire fresh communications of grace, and manifestations of divine love; a renewed sense of pardoning mercy, and an application of the blood of Christ? Do we want holiness, peace, and assurance? Do we want to hear from God, to see him, and be like him? The promise is, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus," Phil. iv. 19. You shall have what you desire, and be satisfied: it shall be enough, and you shall think it so. "The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."—*Benjamin Beddome.*

Verse 10.—The custom is said still to exist in Persia that when the king wishes to do a visitor, an ambassador for instance, especial honor, he desires him to open his mouth wide; and the king then crams it as full of sweetmeats as it will hold; and sometimes even with jewels. Curious as this custom is, it is doubtless referred to in Psalm lxxxi. 10: "*Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it*;" not with baubles of jewels, but with far richer treasure.—*John Gadsby.*

Verse 11.—"*My people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.*" Know, sinner, that if at last thou missest heaven, which, God forbid! the Lord can wash his hands over your head, and clear himself of your blood: thy damnation will be laid at thine own door: it will then appear there was no cheat in the promise, no sophistry in the gospel, but thou didst voluntarily put eternal life from thee, whatever thy lying lips uttered to the contrary: "*My people would have none of me.*" So that, when the jury shall sit on thy murdered soul, to inquire how thou camest to thy miserable end, thou wilt be found guilty of thy own damnation. No one loseth God, but he that is willing to part with him.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 11.—"*And Israel would none of me.*" It is added, "*and Israel would none of me,*" more closely, *was not borne to me by a natural bent.* For this is the original force of the word אבה, as it still survives in Job ix. where it is used of the ships borne outward by a favourable wind and tide.—*Venema.*

Verse 11.—"*Israel would none of me.*" That is, would not be content alone with me, would not *take quiet contentment in me* (as the Hebrew word signifies); the Lord was not good enough for them, but their hearts went out from him to other things.—*Thomas Sheppard*, 1605—1649.

Verse 12.—"*So I gave them up.*" The word *give up* suggests the idea of a *divorce*, whereby a husband sends away a capricious wife, and commands her to live by herself. . . . . Transferred to God, it teaches us nothing else than that God withdraws his *protecting* and *guiding* hand from the people, and leaves them to themselves; so that he ceases to chasten and defend them, but, on the other hand, suffers them *to become hardened and to perish.*—*Venema.*

Verse 12.—"*So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts,*" etc. A man may be given up to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the soul may be saved, but to be given up to sin is a thousand times worse, because that is the fruit of divine anger, in order to the damnation of the soul; here God wounds like an enemy and like a cruel one, and we may boldly say, God never punished any man or woman with this spiritual judgment in kindness and love.—*John Shower* (1657—1715), *in* "*The Day of Grace.*"

Verse 12.—"*I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts.*" O dreadful word! The same will the Spirit do upon our rejecting or resisting of his leading. He may long strive, but he will "not always strive," Gen. vi. 3. If the person led shall once begin to struggle with him that leads him, and shall refuse to follow his guidance, what is then to be done, but to leave him to himself? Continued, rooted, allowed resistance to the Spirit, makes him so to cast off a person as to lead him no more. . . . .

Let it be your great and constant care and endeavour to get the Spirit's leading continued to you. You have it; pray keep it. Can it be well with a Christian, when this is suspended or withdrawn from him? How does he

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wander and bewilder himself, when the Spirit does not guide him! How backward is he to good, when the Spirit does not bend and incline him thereunto! How unable to go, when the Spirit does not uphold him! What vile lusts and passions rule him, when the Spirit does not put forth his holy and gracious government over him! O, it is of infinite concern to all that belong to God, to preserve and secure to themselves the Spirit's leading! Take a good man without this, and he is like a ship without a pilot, a blind man without a guide, a poor child that has none to sustain it, the rude multitude that have none to keep them in any order. What a sad difference is there in the same person, as to what he is when the Spirit *leads* him, and as to what he is when the Spirit *leaves* him! . . . .

OBJECTION.—"But does the Spirit at any time do this to God's people? Does he ever suspend and withdraw his guidance from persons who once lived under it?"

ANSWER.—Yes; too often. It is what he usually does, when his leadings are not followed. This is a thing that grieves him; and when he is grieved he departs, withholds, and recalls his former gracious influences, though not totally and finally; yet for a time and in such a degree. As a guide, that is to conduct the traveller; if this traveller shall refuse to follow him, or shall give unkind usage to him, what does the guide then do? Why, he recedes, and leaves him to shift for himself. It is thus in the case in hand: if we comply with the Spirit, in his motions, and use him tenderly, he will hold on in his leading of us; but if otherwise, he will concern himself no more about us. O, take heed how you carry yourselves towards him: not only upon ingenuousness, it is base to be unkind to our Guide, ("Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way?" Jer. ii. 17,) but also upon the account of self-love: for "as we behave ourselves to him, so he will behave himself to us:" "*Ita nos tractat, ut a nobis tractatur.*"—*Thomas Jacombe* (1622—1687), *in* "*Morning Exercises.*"

Verse 12.—"*I gave them up . . . . and they walked in their own counsels.*" That was to give them up to a spirit of division, to a spirit of discontent, to a spirit of envy, and jealousy, to a spirit of ambition, of self-seeking and emulation, and so to a spirit of distraction and confusion, and so to ruin and destruction. Such, and no better, is the issue, when God gives a people up to their own counsels; then they soon become a very chaos, and run themselves into a ruinous heap. As good have no counsel from man, as none but man's.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 12.—God calls upon Israel to hear and obey him, they will not: "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me." What was the result of their refusal? "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels." God doth not testify his anger for their contempt of him by sending plague, or flames, or wild beasts among them. He doth not say, Well, since they thus slight my authority, I will be avenged on them to purpose; I will give them up to the sword, or famine, or racking diseases, or greedy devouring lions, which would have been sad and grievous; but he executes on them a far more sad and grievous judgment, when he saith, "*So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.*" God's leaving one soul to one lust,* is far worse than leaving him to all the lions in the world. Alas! it will tear the soul worse than a lion can do the body, and rend it in pieces, when there is none to deliver it. God's giving them up to their own wills, that they walked in their own counsels, is in effect a giving them up to eternal wrath and woe.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 12.—God moves everything in his ordinary providence according to their particular natures, God moves everything ordinarily according to the nature he finds it in. Had we stood in innocency, we had been moved according to that originally righteous nature; but since our fall we are

* "One's soul to one's lust"?

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moved according to that nature introduced into us with the expulsion of the other. Our first corruption was our own act, not God's work; we owe our creation to God, our corruption to ourselves. Now since God will govern his creature, I do not see how it can be otherwise, than according to the present nature of the creature, unless God be pleased to alter that nature. God forces no man against his nature; he doth not force the will in conversion, but graciously and powerfully inclines it. He doth never force nor incline the will to sin, but leaves it to the corrupt habits it hath settled in itself: "*So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels;*" counsels of their own framing, not of God's. He moves the will, which is *sponte mala*, according to its own nature and counsels. As a man flings several things out of his hand, which are of several figures, some spherical, tetragons, cylinders, conics, some round and some square, though the motion be from the agent, yet the variety of their motions is from their own figure and frame; and if any will hold his hand upon a ball in its motion, regularly it will move according to its nature and figure; and a man by casting a bowl out of his hand, is the cause of the motion, but the bad bias is the cause of its irregular motion. The power of action is from God, but the viciousness of that action from our own nature. As when a clock or watch hath some fault in any of the wheels, the man that winds it up, or putting his hand upon the wheels moves them, he is the cause of the motion, but it is the flaw in it, a deficiency of something, is the cause of its erroneous motion; that error was not from the person that made it, or the person that winds it up, and sets it on going, but from some other cause; yet till it be mended it will not go otherwise, so long as it is set upon motion. Our motion is from God,—Acts xvii. 28, "In him we move,"—but not the disorder of that motion. It is the fulness of a man's stomach at sea is the cause of his sickness, and not the pilot's government of the ship.

God doth not infuse the lust, or excite it, though he doth present the object about which the lust is exercised. God delivered up Christ to the Jews, he presented him to them, but never commanded them to crucify him, nor infused that malice into them, nor quickened it; but he, seeing such a frame, withdrew his restraining grace, and left them to the conduct of their own vitiated wills. All the corruption in the world ariseth from lust in us, not from the object which God in his providence presents to us: 2 Peter i. 4, "The corruption that is in the world through lust."—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 13.—"*Oh that my people had hearkened unto me,*" etc. God sometimes doth not mind his children when they cry, that they may hereby take occasion to remember how oft he hath cried and they have not minded him. Doth not the Lord cry out to his people of duty and they do not hear him? Doth he not complain here of this neglect, not only as a dishonour, but as a grief unto him? No marvel then if God let his people cry out of misery, and doth not hear them. The Lord shuts his ear that we might consider how we have shut our ears; yea, he shuts his ears that he may open ours. We are moved to hear and answer the call and command of God, though we find that he doth not hear nor answer our call and cry. If the Lord should always be swift to hear us, how slow should we be in hearing him, and while we have our desires, forget most of our duties.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 13.—"*Oh that my people had hearkened,*" etc. God speaks as if he were comforted when he is but heard, or as if we comforted him when we hear him. God beseecheth us, and speaks entreaties to us, that his counsels and commands may be heard: "*Oh that my people had hearkened unto me.*" The Lord tells them indeed it would have proved their consolation (ver. 14): "*I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.*" Yet while he speaks so pathetically, he seems to include his own consolation in it as well as theirs. "*Oh that my people had hearkened unto me:*" it would have been good for them, and it would have given high content to myself.—*Joseph Caryl.*

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Verse 13.—"*O that my people had hearkened unto me,*" etc. There is to us a deep mysteriousness in all this; but the desire of God for our salvation and right moral state, is here most obviously manifested; and let us proceed on that which is obvious, not on that which is obscure.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 13.—"*Walked in my ways.*" None are found in the *ways* of God, but those who have *hearkened* to his words.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 14.—"*Turned my hand.*" God expresseth the utter overthrow of the enemies of his people, but by the *turning of a hand:* if God do but turn his hand, they are all gone presently, soon subdued. If he do but touch the might, the pomp, the greatness, the riches and the power of all those in the world that are opposers of his church, presently they fall to the ground: a touch from the hand of God will end our wars.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 16.—"*Honey out of the rock.*" The rock spiritually and mystically designs Christ, the Rock of salvation, 1 Cor. x. 4; the "*honey*" out of the rock, the fulness of grace in him, and the blessings of it, the sure mercies of David, and the precious promises of the everlasting covenant; and the gospel, which is sweeter than the honey or the honey-comb, and with these such are filled and satisfied who hearken to Christ and walk in his ways; for, as the whole of what is here said shows what Israel lost by disobedience, it clearly suggests what such enjoy who hear and obey.—*John Gill.*

Verse 16.—"*Honey out of the rock.*" God extracts honey out of the rock—the sweetest springs and pleasures from the hardness of afflictions; from mount Calvary and the cross, the blessings that give greatest delight; whereas the world makes from the fountains of pleasure stones and rocks of torment.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 16.—"*Honey out of the rock.*" Most travellers who have visited Palestine in summer have had their attention directed to the abundance of honey, which the bees of the land have stored up in the hollows of trees and in crevices of the rock. In localities where the bare rocks of the desert alone break the sameness of the scene, and all around is suggestive of desolation and death, the traveller has God's care of his chosen people vividly brought to mind, as he sees the honey, which the bees had treasured up beyond his reach, trickling in shining drops down the face of the rock.—*John Duns.*

Verse 16.—When once a people or a person are accepted of God, he spares no cost, nor thinks anything too costly for them. "*He would have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.*" I would not have fed thee with wheat only, that's good; but with the finest wheat, that's the best. We put in the margin, "*with the fat of wheat*"; they should not have had the bran, but the flour, and the finest of the flour; they should have had not only honey, but honey out of the rock, which, as naturalists observe, is the best and purest honey. Surely God cannot think anything of this world too good for his people, who hath not thought the next world too good for them; certainly God cannot think any of these outward enjoyments too good for his people, who hath not thought his Son too good for his people; that's the apostle's argument, Rom. viii. 32: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" even the best of outward good things, when he seeth it good for us.—*Joseph Caryl.*

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HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—Congregational singing should be general, hearty, joyful. The reasons for this, and the benefits of it.

Verses 1—3.—I. Praise should be sincere. It can come from the people of God only. II. It should be constant: they should praise God at all times. III. It should be special. There should be seasons of special praise. 1. Appointed by God, as Sabbaths and solemn feasts. 2. Demanded by providence on occasion of special deliverances and special mercies. IV. It should be public: "sing aloud:" "bring hither," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 4. The rule of ordinances and worship; pleas for going beyond it; instances in various churches; the sin and danger of such will-worship.

Verse 5.—What there is in the language of the world which is unintelligible to the sons of God.

Verse 6.—The emancipation of believers. Law-work is burdensome, servile, never completed, unrewarded, more and more irksome. Only the Lord can deliver us from this slavish toil, and he does it by grace and by power. We do well to remember the time of our liberation, exhibit gratitude for it, and live consistently with it.

Verse 7.—I. Answered prayers,—bonds of gratitude. II. Former testing times,—warning memories. III. The present a time for new answers as it is also for fresh tests.

Verse 7.—Waters of Meribah. The various test-points of the believer's life.

Verses 8—10.—I. A compassionate Father, calling to his child: "O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me." II. A jealous sovereign, laying down his law: "There shall no strange god be in thee." III. An all-sufficient Friend, challenging confidence: "I am the Lord thy God: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."—*Richard Cecil.* 1748—1810.

Verses 8, 11, 13.—The command, the disobedience, the regret.

Verse 9.—Idolatry our besetting sin. What are likely to become our idols. The sin of permitting them so to be. The judgments we may expect. The means we should use to purge ourselves therefrom.

Verse 10.—1. Emptiness supposed in poor sinners: they have lost God. 2. A fill proposed and offered to empty sinners. This is a soul-fill; a filling with all the fullness of God. 3. The party communicating this soul-fill to the sinner: "*I*," more generally, "*I the Lord*," in opposition to strange gods. 4. The sinner's duty in order to this communication: "*Open thy mouth wide.*"—*Thomas Boston.*

Verse 10.—I. The God of past mercy: "which brought thee out of Egypt." II. Expects present petitions: "Open thy mouth wide." III. Promises future good: "I will fill it."

Verse 11.—I. Who? "Israel," the chosen, instructed and favoured people. II. What? "would none of me," my laws, promises, calls, worship, etc. III. Of whom? "Of ME," their God, good, kind, loving, etc.

Verses 11, 12.—I. The sin of Israel. They would not hearken. The mouth is opened in attentive hearing: "open thy mouth wide;" "but my people," etc. Their sin was greatly aggravated. 1. By what God had done for them. 2. By the gods they had preferred to him. II. The punishment. 1. Its greatness: "I gave them up," etc. 2. Its justice: "They would none of me."—*G. R.*

Verse 13.—The excellent estate of an obedient believer. I. Enemies subdued. II. Enjoyments perpetuated. III. Abundance possessed.

Verses 13, 14.—The sin and loss of the backslider.

Verse 14.—Spiritual enemies best combatted by an obedient life.

Verse 16.—I. Spiritual dainties. II. By whom provided. III. To whom given. IV. With what result—"satisfied."

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PSALM LXXXII.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—A Psalm of Asaph. *This poet of the temple here acts as a preacher to the court and to the magistracy. Men who do one thing well are generally equal to another; he who writes good verse is not unlikely to be able to preach. What preaching it would have been had Milton entered the pulpit, or had Virgil been an apostle.*

Asaph's sermon before the judges is now before us. He speaks very plainly, and his song is rather characterised by strength than by sweetness. We have here a clear proof that all psalms and hymns need not be direct expressions of praise to God; we may, according to the example of this psalm, admonish one another in our songs. Asaph no doubt saw around him much bribery and corruption, and while David punished it with the sword, he resolved to scourge it with a prophetic psalm. In so doing, the sweet singer was not forsaking his profession as a musician for the Lord, but rather was practically carrying it out in another department. He was praising God when he rebuked the sin which dishonoured him, and if he was not making music, he was hushing discord when he bade rulers dispense justice with impartiality.

The Psalm is a whole and needs no formal division.

EXPOSITION.

GOD standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.

2 How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah.

3 Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.

4 Deliver the poor and needy: rid *them* out of the hand of the wicked.

5 They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.

6 I have said, Ye *are* gods, and all of you *are* children of the most High.

7 But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.

1. "*God standeth in the congregation of the mighty.*" He is the overlooker, who, from his own point of view, sees all that is done by the great ones of the earth. When they sit in state he stands over them, ready to deal with them if they pervert judgment. Judges shall be judged, and to justices justice shall be meted out. Our village squires and country magistrates would do well to remember this. Some of them had need go to school to Asaph till they have mastered this psalm. Their harsh decisions and strange judgments are made in the presence of him who will surely visit them for every unseemly act, for he has no respect unto the person of any, and is the champion of the poor and needy. A higher authority will criticise the decision of petty sessions, and even the judgments of our most impartial judges will be revised by the High Court of heaven. "*He judgeth among the gods.*" They are gods to other men, but he is GOD to them. He lends them his name, and this is their authority for acting as

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judges, but they must take care that they do not misuse the power entrusted to them, for the Judge of judges is in session among them. Our puisne judges are but puny judges, and their brethren who administer common law will one day be tried by the common law. This great truth is, upon the whole, well regarded among us in these times, but it was not so in the earlier days of English history, when Jeffries, and such as he, were an insult to the name of justice. Oriental judges, even now, are frequently, if not generally, amenable to bribes, and in past ages it was very hard to find a ruler who had any notion of justice apart from his own arbitrary will. Such plain teaching as this psalm contains was needful indeed, and he was a bold good man who, in such uncourtly phrases, delivered his own soul.

2. "*How long will ye judge unjustly and accept the persons of the wicked?*" It is indirectly stated that the magistrates had been unjust and corrupt. They not only excused the wicked, but even decided in their favour against the righteous. A little of this is too much, a short time too long. Some suitors could get their claims settled at once, and in their own favour, while others were wearing out their lives by waiting for an audience, or were robbed by legal process because their opponents had the judge's ear: how long were such things to be perpetrated? Would they never remember the Great Judge, and renounce their wickedness? This verse is so grandly stern that one is tempted to say, "Surely an Elijah is here." "*Selah.*" This gives the offenders pause for consideration and confession.

3. "*Defend the poor and fatherless.*" Cease to do evil, learn to do well. Look not to the interests of the wealthy whose hands proffer you bribes, but protect the rights of the needy, and especially uphold the claims of orphans whose property too often becomes a prey. Do not hunt down the peasant for gathering a few sticks, and allow the gentlemanly swindler to break through the meshes of the law. "*Do justice to the afflicted and needy.*" Even they can claim from you as judge no more than justice; your pity for their circumstances must not make you hold the scales unfairly: but if you give them no more than justice, at least be sure that you give them that to the full. Suffer not the afflicted to be further afflicted by enduring injustice, and let not the needy long stand in need of an equitable hearing.

4. "*Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.*" Break the nets of the man-catchers, the legal toils, the bonds, the securities, with which cunning men capture and continue to hold in bondage the poor and the embarrassed. It is a brave thing when a judge can liberate a victim like a fly from the spider's web, and a horrible case when magistrate and plunderer are in league. Law has too often been an instrument for vengeance in the hand of unscrupulous men, an instrument as deadly as poison or the dagger. It is for the judge to prevent such villainy.

5. "*They know not, neither will they understand.*" A wretched plight for a nation to be in when its justices know no justice, and its judges are devoid of judgment. Neither to know his duty nor to wish to know it is rather the mark of an incorrigible criminal than of a magistrate, yet such a stigma was justly set upon the rulers of Israel. "*They walk on in darkness.*" They are as reckless as they are ignorant. Being both ignorant and wicked they yet dare to pursue a path in which knowledge and righteousness are essential: they go on without hesitation, forgetful of the responsibilities in which they are involved, and the punishment which they are incurring. "*All the foundations of the earth are out of course.*" When the dispensers of law have dispensed with justice, settlements are unsettled, society is unhinged, the whole fabric of the nation is shaken. When injustice is committed in due course of law the world is indeed out of course. When "Justices' justice" becomes a by-word it is time that justice dealt with justices. Surely it would be well that certain of "the great unpaid" should be paid off, when day after day their judgments show that they have no judgment. When peasants may be horsewhipped by farmers with impunity, and a pretty bird is thought more precious than poor

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men, the foundations of the earth are indeed sinking like rotten piles unable to bear up the structures built upon them. Thank God we have, as an almost invariable rule, incorruptible judges; may it always be so. Even our lesser magistrates are, in general, most worthy men; for which we ought to be grateful to God evermore.

6. "*I have said, ye are gods.*" The greatest honour was thus put upon them; they were delegated gods, clothed for a while with a little of that authority by which the Lord judges among the sons of men. "*And all of you are children of the Most High.*" This was their *ex-officio* character, not their moral or spiritual relationship. There must be some government among men, and as angels are not sent to dispense it, God allows men to rule over men, and endorses their office, so far at least that the prostitution of it becomes an insult to his own prerogatives. Magistrates would have no right to condemn the guilty if God had not sanctioned the establishment of government, the administration of law, and the execution of sentences. Here the Spirit speaks most honourably of these offices, even when it censures the officers; and thereby teaches us to render honour to whom honour is due, honour to the office even if we award censure to the office-bearer.

7. "*But ye shall die like men.*" What sarcasm it seems! Great as the office made the men, they were still but men, and must die. To every judge this verse is a *memento mori!* He must leave the bench to stand at the bar, and on the way must put off the ermine to put on the shroud. "*And fall like one of the princes.*" Who were usually the first to die: for battle, sedition, and luxury, made greater havoc among the great than among any others. Even as princes have often been cut off by sudden and violent deaths, so should the judges be who forget to do justice. Men usually respect the office of a judge, and do not conspire to slay him, as they do to kill princes and kings; but injustice withdraws this protection, and puts the unjust magistrate in personal danger. How quickly death unrobes the great. What a leveller he is. He is no advocate for liberty, but in promoting equality and fraternity he is a masterly democrat. Great men die as common men do. As their blood is the same, so the stroke which lets out their life produces the same pains and throes. No places are too high for death's arrows: he brings down his birds from the tallest trees. It is time that all men considered this.

8. "*Arise, O God, judge the earth.*" Come thou Judge of all mankind, put the bad judges to thy bar and end their corruption and baseness. Here is the world's true hope of rescue from the fangs of tyranny. "*For thou shalt inherit all nations.*" The time will come when all races of men shall own their God, and accept him as their king. There is one who is "King by right divine," and he is even now on his way. The last days shall see him enthroned, and all unrighteous potentates broken like potter's vessels by his potent sceptre. The second advent is still earth's brightest hope. Come quickly, even so, come, Lord Jesus.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—Asaph, who has written so much in the previous Psalms of the coming of Christ in the flesh, now speaks of his second coming to judgment.—*Josephus Maria Thomasius.* 1649—1713.

Verse 1.—"*God standeth.*" He is said to *stand*, because of his immutability, his power, his abiding presence, and also because of his promptness in act, to decide for the right, and to help the poor, as he did S. Stephen. But one commentator draws a yet deeper lesson from the word *stand.* He reminds us that it is for the judge to sit, and for the litigants or accused to stand; as it is written, "Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from

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the morning until the evening." Exodus xviii. 13. It is then a solemn warning for judges to remember, that whatever cause is before them is God's cause, since right and wrong are at stake in it, and that by acquitting the guilty, or condemning the innocent, they pass sentence against God himself.—*Albertus Magnus, Le Blanc, and Agellius, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 1.—"*God standeth in the congregation of the mighty,*" or, "*of God.*" These words are exegetical, and help to illustrate what he had said before: "*God standeth in the congregation of God.*" What is that? Why he judgeth as supreme amongst the judges of the world. He stands not as a cipher, or a bare spectator, but he himself makes one amongst them. 1. He judgeth actively amongst them. We look upon men, and think the judgment is theirs, but it is God that exerciseth judgment amongst them. He knows the causes, directs the judges, and executes the sentence. 2. Passively, he is so in the midst of these earthly gods, that if they do unjustly he will execute justice on them, and judge the judges of the world; for though they be great, yet there is a greater than they, to whom they must shortly give an account.—*Thomas Hall.* 1659—60.

Verse 1.—"*In the congregation.*"—Rulers must understand that they are not placed over stocks and stones, nor over swine and dogs, but over the congregation of God: they must therefore be afraid of acting against God himself when they act unjustly.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 2.—"*And accept the persons of the wicked.*" The last clause exemplifies one of the most peculiar Hebrew idioms. The combination usually rendered *respect persons* in the English Bible, and applied to judicial partiality, means literally to *take* (or *take up*) *faces.* Some suppose this to mean the raising of the countenance, or causing to look up from dejection. But the highest philological authorities are now agreed, that the primary idea is that of accepting one man's face or person rather than another's, the precise form of expression, though obscure, being probably derived from the practice of admitting suitors to confer with governors or rulers face to face, a privilege which can sometimes only be obtained by bribes, especially, though not exclusively, in oriental courts.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 3.—It is said of Francis the First, of France, that when a woman kneeled to him to beg justice, he bade her stand up; for, said he, Woman, it is justice that I owe thee, and justice thou shalt have; if thou beg anything of me, let it be mercy. A happy place and people surely, where justice (as it seemeth), was not extorted, but dropt as kindly as honey from the comb; where there was no sale of offices, no exchanging of fees, no subtleties of delay, no trucking for expedition, no making snares of petty penal statutes: where Justice had scales in her hand, not to weigh gold, but equity: where judges and magistrates were as Noah's ark to take in weary doves, and as the horns of the altar, for oppressed innocency to betake himself unto; where lawyers, advocates, pleaders, did not call evil good, or good evil, bitter sweet, etc., where plaintiffs and accusers did not inform or persecute through malice, envy, or for advantage; where subordinate officers durst not help potent delinquents out of the briars, nor suffer poor men, tempest-tossed in law, to languish in their business within ken of harbour for want of giving a sop to Cerberus, or sacrificing to the great Diana of expedition; where those setting dogs, such as base, promoting informers, were not countenanced, and severely punished upon any false, unjust, or malicious information. To close up all, where the magistrate owed justice to the people, and paid it; where the people begged for *mercy* and had it.—*William Price,* 1642.

Verses 3, 4.—The touchstone of magistrates' justice is in the causes and cases of the *poor, fatherless, afflicted, and needy,* who are not able to attend long their suits of law, have no friends nor money to deal for them; to whom, therefore, the mighty should be eyes to direct them, and a staff to their weakness, to support and help them in their right.—*David Dickson.*

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Verse 5.—"*They know not, neither will they understand,*" etc. Every judge must have in him (as Baldus acutally said) two kinds of salt; the first is *sal scientiæ*, that he may know his duty; the second is *sal conscientiæ*, that he may do his duty. Such as fail in the first, are censured here with a *nescierunt*, and *non intellexerunt;* such as fail in the second, are branded here with an *ambulant in tenebris.*

The dangers upon the neglect of these duties are two: the one concerning the whole commonwealth, "*All the foundations of the earth are out of course;*" the other especially touching the private persons of the judges, at the seventh verse, "*Ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes,*" and after death comes judgment, verse 8: "*Arise, O God, judge the earth.*" Almighty God "standeth in the congregation of princes, and is a judge among gods;" he sits Chief Justice in every session and assize, to mark what matters pass, and how they pass, ready to judge those righteously, who judge others unjustly, "giving wrong judgment, and accepting the persons of the wicked." Ps. lxvii. 4.* Thus I have made the way plain before you; God infinitely rich in mercy grant, that both I in speaking, and you in hearing, may walk therein (as the blessed Apostle phraseth it, Gal. ii. 14) "with a right foot."

"*They know not, neither will they understand.*" That is, they neither "*know*" God, who made them gods; nor yet "*understand*" his law, which is a lantern to their feet, and a light to their paths. Or, as Placidus Parmensis upon the place,—They neither consider how they that be called "*gods,*" as commissioners and ministers of God, ought to judge others; nor yet remember how they shall be judged themselves at the last day, when "all the foundations of the world shall be moved," and God himself shall "arise to judge the earth." Or, they be so corrupt and abominable, that they will neither learn what is their office from others, nor yet understand it by themselves. Or briefly, to give that gloss (which fits best I think the text, I am sure the time), *Nescierunt quid facti, non intelexerunt quid juris;* they were both ignorant in the matter of fact, as not searching out the cause; and ignorant in the matter of law, sitting (as Paul said of Ananias), to give judgment according to the law, and yet commanding that which is contrary to the law. The first concerns a good deal the jury, the second a great deal the judges; in both are condemned, as the nurses of all confusions in a commonwealth, *ignorantia simplex*, and *affectata;* simple ignorance, when as they be so shallow that they cannot; affected ignorance, when as they be so deep, that they will not understand what is right and reason.—*John Boys, in* "*The Judge's Charge,*" 1618.

Verse 6.—"*Ye are gods,*" etc. It is, of course, to civil governors, especially those entrusted with the administration of justice, that the prophet addresses this stern admonition. He calls them "the gods," and "the sons of the Most High." To the people of Israel this kind of appellation would not seem over bold: for it was applied to judges in well-known texts of the Law of Moses. Thus, in the code of civil statutes delivered at Sinai, it is said, "Thou shalt not revile *the gods*, nor curse the ruler of thy people." Exod. xxii. 28. Nor is that the only instance of the kind. In two other passages of the same code (Exod. xxi. 6, and xxii. 8, 9), the word which our translators have rendered "the judges" is in the Hebrew, "the gods," or "God." Since the ordinary Hebrew word for God (Elohim) is almost always used in the plural form, it is hard to say whether it ought to be rendered in these passages in the singular or plural. The meaning is the same either way. It is a matter of indifference, for example, whether the law in Exodus xxi. 6, be rendered thus, "his (the bondman's) master shall bring him to *the gods*"; or, with the Septuagint, "his master shall bring him to the judgment-seat of God." * In either case the terms used are plainly meant to imply that the Majesty of God is present in the place of judgment. As it is said of Solomon that he "sat on the throne of the LORD as King," 1 Chron.

* πρὸς τὸ κριτήριον τοῦ Θεοῦ.

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xxix. 23, so it may be said of every magistrate that he sits in God's seat. God has put upon him a portion of his own dominion and authority; and has ordained that he is to be obeyed, not for wrath's sake only, but for conscience' sake. The civil magistrate, in discharging his high function, may justly claim to govern with a divine right.

No one needs to be told that this old doctrine of the divine right of rulers has been wofully abused. Sycophantic divines have often made of it a flattering unction for the ears of princes; teaching them that they owed no obedience to the laws; that they were responsible to none but God for their administration; that any attempt on the part of the people to curb their tyranny, or to depose them from their seats when milder measures failed, was rebellion against God whose Vicegerents they were. Even now, the same doctrine occasionally makes itself heard from the pulpit and the press; and thus men attempt to subject the consciences of the people to the caprice of tyrants. Let it be carefully observed that the harp of Asaph lends no sanction to this "right divine of kings to govern wrong." If the prophet testifies that princes are gods, he includes in the honour the humblest magistrate. The elders administering justice in the gate of Bethlehem, though their town be little among the thousands of Judah, sit in God's seat as truly as King Solomon on his ivory throne in the porch of judgment at Jerusalem. The common saying that "the divine right of kings is the divine right of constables," is a rough way of expressing a Bible truth. Let this be borne in mind, and no one will allege Scripture in defence of royal claims to indefeasible and irresponsible authority, or claim for such authority the sanction of divine right.

But while care ought to be taken to guard the divine right of civil government from abuse, the right itself is not to be forgotten. The state is an ordinance of God, having, like the family, its foundation in the very constitution of human nature. The officers of the state, whether supreme or subordinate, have a divine right to administer justice in the community over which Providence has placed them. They who resort to the civil magistrate for judgment, resort to the judgment-seat of God; just as they who resort to the Ministry of the Word resort to the Great Prophet of the Church. Unless the magistrate had received a commission from God, he could not lawfully bear the sword. To take the life of an unarmed fellow-man, without a commission from the Most High warranting the act, would be to commit murder.—*William Binnie.*

Verse 6.—In his *Lex Rex*, Rutherford argues from this psalm that judges are not the creatures of kings, to execute their pleasure, and do not derive their power from the monarch, but are authorized by God himself as much as the king, and are therefore bound to execute justice whether the monarch desires it or no.

Verse 6.—"*I have said, ye are gods.*" Princes and judges are "*gods*" (*Elohim*), on the ground that "unto them the word of God came" (John x. 35), constituting them such. Even here, when God is about to pass sentence on them, he begins with recognizing their divinely-appointed dignity on which they presumed, as if giving them absolute power to do as they pleased, right or wrong; forgetting that high office has its *duties* as well as its *dignities*. *Sonship* is closely allied to *kingship* and *judgeship*. These combined dignities, which by all others have been abused, shall be realized in all their grandest ideal by the coming King, Judge, and Son of the Most High (Ps. ii. 6, 7, 10—12.)—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 6.—"*I have said, ye are gods.*" As parasites in base flattery and compliance with their pride, have vainly called some of them so, and as some princes have most wickedly and blasphemously affected to be called, yea to be adored, as gods, (God will take highest vengeance upon all those who take his name upon them, or submit to it when given them), so God himself hath put his own name upon magistrates, to mind them of their duty, or for a twofold end: First, that being called gods, they should judge and rule as God doth, or with a mind like God, free from the mixture of a private or passionate spirit,

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and filled with a love to, and a delight in, impartial judgment and righteousness. Secondly, that being called gods, all men might learn their duty, freely to submit to them and duly to honour them; seeing any dishonour done to them reflects upon God whose name they bear.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 6.—"*Gods.*" It is not *Jah* or *Jehovah*, a name of *essence*, but *Eloah* or *Elohim*, a name of *office* that is given them.—*Thomas Gataker.*

Verses 6, 7.—"*Ye are gods;*" there he considered their pomp and dignity: "*But ye shall die like men;*" there he minds their end, that with the change of his note they might also change countenance. He tells them their honour, but withal their lot. In power, wealth, train, titles, friends, they differ from others; in death they differ not from others. They are cold when winter comes, withered with age, weak with sickness, and melt away with death, as the meanest: all to ashes. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower," 1 Pet. i. 24: the glory, that is, the best of it, but a flower. No great difference, the flower shows fairer, the grass stands longer, one scythe cuts down both. Beasts fat and lean, fed in one pasture, killed in one slaughter. The prince in his lofty palace, the beggar in his lowly cottage, have double difference, local and ceremonial height and lowness; yet meet at the grave, and are mingled in ashes. We walk in this world as a man in a field of snow; all the way appears smooth, yet cannot we be sure of any step. All are like actors on a stage, some have one part and some another, death is still busy amongst us; here drops one of the players, we bury him with sorrow, and to our scene again: then falls another, yea all, one after another, till death be left upon the stage. Death is that damp which puts out all the dim lights of vanity. Yet man is easier to believe that all the world shall die, than to suspect himself.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 7.—"*Ye shall die like men,*" etc. Even you which glisten like angels, whom all the world admires, and sues and bows to, which are called honourable, mighty and gracious lords, I will tell you to what your honour shall come: first, ye shall wax old like others, then ye shall fall sick like others, then ye shall die like others, then ye shall be buried like others, then ye shall be consumed like others, then ye shall be judged like others, even like the beggars which cry at your gates: one sickens, the other sickens; one dies, the other dies; one rots, the other rots: look in the grave, and shew me which was Dives and which was Lazarus. This is some comfort to the poor, that once he shall be like the rich; one day he shall be as wealthy, and as glorious as a king; one hour of death will make all alike; they which crowed over others, and looked down upon them like oaks, others shall walk upon them like worms, and they shall be gone as if they had never been.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 7.—"*Ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.*" The meditation of death would pull down the plumes of pride; thou art but dust animated; shall dust and ashes be proud? Thou hast a grassy body, and shall shortly be mowed down: "*I have said, ye are gods;*" but lest they should grow proud, he adds a corrective: "*ye shall die like men;*" ye are dying gods. —*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 7.—"*And fall like one of the princes.*" Tyrants seldom go to their graves in peace. Most of the Cæsars fell by the hands of the people, *q.d.*, If you be like tyrants in sin, expect to be like them in punishment; as I cast them out of their thrones for their insolence and violence, so will I cast you out, and you shall fall like one of these tyrannical princes.—*Thomas Hall.*

Verse 7.—1. Ye shall fall from the highest pinnacle of honour and reputation. The place of magistracy, which knoweth you now, will know you no more. One of the ancients, standing by Cæsar's tomb, crieth out, *Ubi nunc pulchritudo Cæsaris? quo abiit magnificentia ejus?* Where is now the beauty; what is become of the magnificence; where are the armies now; where the honours, the triumphs, the trophies of Cæsar? All was gone when Cæsar was gone. Your honours and your worships, your power, and your places, all die with

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you, if not before you. 2. Ye fall from your greatest treasures and possessions. As ye brought nothing into the world, so it is certain ye shall carry nothing out of the world. 1 Tim. vi. 7. Saladin, the mighty monarch of the east, is gone, and hath carried no more along with him than ye see—*i.e.*, a shirt hung up for that purpose—said the priest that went before the bier. 3. Ye fall from all your friends and relations; when ye die, they that were near and dear to you will leave you.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 7.—*Impressiveness* is a leading characteristic of the "death" or "fall" of "princes:" such incidents, from a variety of causes, are most striking. But can the same remark be commonly made respecting the decease of the children of poverty? Regard being had to the startling effect which the demise of the potentate is calculated to produce,—has the departure of the *peasant*, for example, in itself, the same tendency to beget solemnity and awe, so that, even under this point of view, the peasant might be justly affirmed to "*fall like one of the princes*"? Indeed, if you think of the outward circumstances attending *his* last moments; and then, immediately afterwards, of those which belong to the close of the life of the dweller in regal or stately halls, there would seem to be hardly any ground here for instituting the slightest comparison: but I would have you to associate the man, as he lies on the eve of dissolution, not with others, his superiors in rank, in a similar case, but with *himself*, when, in the full vigour of existence, he walked to and fro, and performed his own humble but laborious share of this world's business; and, as you subsequently mark how the great Destroyer has crushed all his energies, and left but a corpse behind, you will surely admit that there is as wide a difference between the individual as he *was* and as he *is*, as there can possibly be between the scenes at the death-beds, respectively, of princes and of the poor. Yes, and as *impressive* a difference too; so that you have only to allow the exhibition of the striking change to have its legitimate effect upon the mind, and then, so far as that effect will be concerned, you may declare of the rural labourer, that "*he has fallen like one of the princes;*" seeing that he has given a lesson every whit as awakening and as emphatic in its admonitions as could the other.—*Hugh B. Moffatt*, 1861.

Verses 7, 8.—Your day is coming! The saints are raising the loud cry of verse 8, inviting Messiah, the true God, the Son of the Most High (John x. 34), the Mighty One, the Judge and Ruler, to arise and take his *inheritance*, for he is the "*heir of all things;*" and to be the true Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Barak, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Samson, and Samuel, who will *judge*, or govern and rule, a mismanaged earth. We sing this song of Zion in his ears, urging him to come quickly; and we sing it to one another in joyful hope, while the foundations of earth seem out of course, because here we find *Messiah the true Judge of a misgoverned world.*—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 8.—"*Arise, O God.*" A metaphor taken from the common gesture of judges, whose usual manner is to sit while they are hearing of cases; to arise and stand up when they come to give sentence.—*Thomas Gataker.*

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HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—The sovereignty of God over the most powerful and exalted. How that sovereignty reveals itself, and what we may expect from it.

Verse 1.—The Lord's presence in cabinets and senates.

Verse 2.—A common sin. Regard for the persons of men often influences our judgment of their opinions, virtues, vices, and general bearing; this involves injustice to others, as well as deep injury to the flattered.

Verse 3.—A plea for orphans.

Verse 5.—I. The characters of wicked princes. 1. Ignorance: "They know not." 2. Wilful blindness: "Neither will they," etc. 3. Unrestrained perverseness: "They walk on," etc. II. The consequences to others: "All the foundations," etc. 1. Of personal security. 2. Of social comfort. 3. Of commercial prosperity. 4. Of national tranquillity. 5. Of religious liberty; all are out of course.—*G. R.*

Verse 5 (*middle clause*).—A description of the pilgrimage of presumptuous sinners.

Verse 6.—"*Ye are gods.*" The passages in the Old Testament which involve the doctrine of the divinity of Christ.—*J. P. Lange.*

Verse 8.—I. The invocation: "Arise," etc. II. The prediction: "For thou shalt," etc.—*G. R.*

WORK ON THE EIGHTY-SECOND PSALM.

"*The Beauty of Magistracy. An Exposition of Psalm LXXXII.*" By THOMAS HALL, B.D 1659—60. [In SWINNOCK'S WORKS. Vol. IV. Nichol's Edition.]

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PSALM LXXXIII.

TITLE.—A Psalm *or* Song of Asaph. *This is the last occasion upon which we shall meet with this eloquent writer. The patriotic poet sings again of wars and dangers imminent, but it is no godless song of a thoughtless nation entering upon war with a light heart. Asaph the seer is well aware of the serious dangers arising from the powerful confederate nations, but his soul in faith stays itself upon Jehovah, while as a poet-preacher he excites his countrymen to prayer by means of this sacred lyric. The Asaph who penned this song was in all probability the person referred to in* 2 *Chron.* xx. 14, *for the internal evidence referring the subject of the Psalm to the times of Jehoshaphat is overwhelming. The division in the camp of the confederate peoples in the wilderness of Tekoa not only broke up their league, but led to a mutual slaughter, which crippled the power of some of the nations for many years after. They thought to destroy Israel and destroyed each other.*

DIVISION.—*An appeal to God in a general manner fills the verses from* 1—4; *and then the psalmist enters into details of the league,* 5—8. *This leads to an earnest entreaty for the overthrow of the enemy,* 9—15, *with an expression of desire that God's glory may be promoted thereby.*

EXPOSITION.

KEEP not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.

2 For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head.

3 They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones.

4 They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.

1. "*Keep not thou silence, O God.*" Man is clamorous, be not thou speechless. He rails and reviles, wilt not thou reply? One word of thine can deliver thy people; therefore, O Lord, break thy quiet and let thy voice be heard. "*Hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.*" Here the appeal is to EL, the Mighty One. He is entreated to act and speak, because his nation suffers and is in great jeopardy. How entirely the psalmist looks to God; he asks not for "a leader bold and brave," or for any form of human force, but casts his burden upon the Lord, being well assured that his eternal power and Godhead could meet every difficulty of the case.

2. "*For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult:*" They are by no means sparing of their words, they are like a hungry pack of dogs, all giving tongue at once. So sure are they of devouring thy people that they already shout over the feast. "*And they that hate thee have lifted up the head.*" Confident of conquest, they carry themselves proudly and exalt themselves as if their anticipated victories were already obtained. These enemies of Israel were also God's enemies, and are here described as such by way of adding intensity to the argument of the intercession. The adversaries of the church are usually a noisy and a boastful crew. Their pride is a brass which always sounds, a cymbal which is ever tinkling.

3. "*They have taken crafty counsel against thy people.*" Whatever we may do, our enemies use their wits and lay their heads together; in united conclave

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they discourse upon the demands and plans of the campaign, using much treachery and serpentine cunning in arranging their schemes. Malice is cold-blooded enough to plot with deliberation; and pride, though it be never wise, is often allied with craft. "*And consulted against thy hidden ones.*" Hidden away from all harm are the Lord's chosen; their enemies think not so, but hope to smite them; they might as well attempt to destroy the angels before the throne of God.

4. "*They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation.*" Easier said than done. Yet it shows how thorough-going are the foes of the church. Theirs was the policy of extermination. They laid the axe at the root of the matter. Rome has always loved this method of warfare, and hence she has gloated over the massacre of Bartholomew, and the murders of the Inquisition. "*That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.*" They would blot them out of history as well as out of existence. Evil is intolerant of good. If Israel would let Edom alone yet Edom cannot be quiet, but seeks like its ancestor to kill the chosen of the Lord. Men would be glad to cast the church out of the world because it rebukes them, and is thus a standing menace to their sinful peace.

5 For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee:
6 The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes.
7 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre.
8 Assur also is joined with them; they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.

5. "*For they have consulted together with one consent.*" They are hearty and unanimous in their designs. They seem to have but one heart, and that a fierce one, against the chosen people and their God. "*They are confederate against thee.*" At the Lord himself they aim through the sides of his saints. They make a covenant, and ratify it with blood, resolutely banding themselves together to war with the Mighty God.

6. "*The tabernacles of Edom.*" Nearest of kin, yet first in enmity. Their sire despised the birthright, and they despise the possessors of it. Leaving their rock-built mansions for the tents of war, the Edomites invaded the land of Israel. "*And the Ishmaelites.*" A persecuting spirit ran in their blood, they perpetuated the old grudge between the child of the bondwoman and the son of the freewoman. "*Of Moab.*" Born of incest, but yet a near kinsman, the feud of Moab against Israel was very bitter. Little could righteous Lot have dreamed that his unhallowed seed would be such unrelenting enemies of his uncle Abraham's posterity. "*And the Hagarenes*"—perhaps descendants of Hagar by a second husband. Whoever they may have been, they cast their power into the wrong scale, and with all their might sought the ruin of Israel. Children of Hagar, and all others who dwell around Mount Sinai, which is in Arabia, are of the seed which gendereth to bondage, and hence they hate the seed according to promise.

7. "*Gebal*" was probably a near neighbour of Edom, though there was a Gebal in the region of Tyre and Sidon. "*And Ammon, and Amalek.*" Two other hereditary foes of Israel, fierce and remorseless as ravening wolves. In the roll of infamy let these names remain detestably immortalised. How thick they stand Their name is legion, for they are many. Alas, poor Israel, how art thou to stand against such a Bloody League? Nor is this all. Here comes another tribe of ancient foemen, "*the Philistines;*" who once blinded Samson, and captured the ark of the Lord; and here are old allies

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become new enemies; the builders of the temple conspiring to pull it down, even "*the inhabitants of Tyre.*" These last were mercenaries who cared not at whose bidding they drew sword, so long as they carved something for their own advantage. True religion has had its quarrel with merchants and craftsmen, and because it has interfered with their gains, they have conspired against it.

8. "*Assur is also joined with them.*" It was then a rising power, anxious for growth, and it thus early distinguished itself for evil. What a motley group they were; a league against Israel is always attractive, and gathers whole nations within its bonds. Herod and Pilate are friends, if Jesus is to be crucified. Romanism and Ritualism make common cause against the gospel. "*They have holpen the children of Lot.*" All these have come to the aid of Moab and Ammon, which two nations were among the fiercest in the conspiracy. There were ten to one against Israel, and yet she overcame all her enemies. Her name is not blotted out; but many, nay, most of her adversaries are now a name only, their power and their excellence are alike gone.

"*Selah.*" There was good reason for a pause when the nation was in such jeopardy: and yet it needs faith to make a pause, for unbelief is always in a hurry.

9 Do unto them as *unto* the Midianites; as *to* Sisera, as *to* Jabin, at the brook of Kison:

10 *Which* perished at En-dor: they became *as* dung for the earth.

11 Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna:

12 Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.

13 O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind.

14 As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;

15 So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.

9. "*Do unto them as unto the Midianites.*" Faith delights to light upon precedents, and quote them before the Lord; in the present instance, Asaph found a very appropriate one, for the nations in both cases were very much the same, and the plight of the Israelites very similar. Yet Midian perished, and the psalmist trusted that Israel's present foes would meet with the like overthrow from the hand of the Lord. "*As to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison.*" The hosts were swept away by the suddenly swollen torrent, and utterly perished; which was a second instance of divine vengeance upon confederated enemies of Israel. When God wills it, a brook can be as deadly as a sea. Kishon was as terrible to Jabin as was the Red Sea to Pharaoh. How easily can the Lord smite the enemies of his people. God of Gideon and of Barak, wilt thou not again avenge thine heritage of their bloodthirsty foes?

10. "*Which perished at En-dor.*" There was the centre of the carnage, where the heaps of the slain lay thickest. "*They became as dung for the earth,*" manuring it with man; making the earth, like Saturn, feed on its own children. War is cruel, but in this case its avengements were most just,—those who would not give Israel a place above ground are themselves denied a hiding-place under the ground; they counted God's people to be as dung, and they became dung themselves. Asaph would have the same fate befall other enemies of Israel; and his prayer was a prophecy, for so it happened to them.

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11. "*Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb.*" Smite the great ones as well as the common ruck. Suffer not the ringleaders to escape. As Oreb fell at the rock and Zeeb at the winepress, so do thou mete out vengeance to Zion's foes wherever thou mayest overtake them. They boastfully compare themselves to ravens and wolves; let them receive the fate which is due to such wild beasts. "*Yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna.*" These were captured and slain by Gideon, despite their claiming to have been anointed to the kingdom. Zebah became a sacrifice, and Zalmunna was sent to those shadowy images from which his name is derived. The psalmist seeing these four culprits hanging in history upon a lofty gallows, earnestly asks that others of a like character may, for truth and righteousness' sake, share their fate.

12. "*Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.*" Viewing the temple, and also the dwellings of the tribes, as all belonging to God, these greedy plunderers determined to push out the inhabitants, slay them, and become themselves landlords and tenants of the whole. These were large words and dark designs, but God could bring them all to nothing. It is in vain for men to say "Let us take," if God does not give. He who robs God's house will find that he has a property reeking with a curse; it will plague him and his seed for ever. "Will a man rob God?" Let him try it, and he will find it hot and heavy work.

13. "*O my God, make them like a wheel;*" like a rolling thing which cannot rest, but is made to move with every breath. Let them have no quiet. May their minds eternally revolve and never come to peace. Blow them away like thistle down, "*as the stubble before the wind.*" Scatter them, chase them, drive them to destruction. Every patriot prays thus against the enemies of his country, he would be no better than a traitor if he did not.

14. "*As the fire burneth a wood.*" Long years have strewn the ground with deep deposits of leaves; these being dried in the sun are very apt to take fire, and when they do so the burning is terrific. The underwood and the ferns blaze, the bushes crackle, the great trees kindle and to their very tops are wrapped in fire, while the ground is all red as a furnace. In this way, O Lord, mete out destruction to thy foes, and bring all of them to an end. "*The flame setteth the mountains on fire.*" Up the hill sides the hanging woods glow like a great sacrifice, and the forests on the mountain's crown smoke towards heaven. Even thus, O Lord, do thou conspicuously and terribly overthrow the enemies of thine Israel.

15. "*So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.*" The Lord will follow up his enemies, alarm them, and chase them till they are put to a hopeless rout. He did this, according to the prayer of the present Psalm, for his servant Jehoshaphat; and in like manner will he come to the rescue of any or all of his chosen.

16 Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD.

17 Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:

18 That *men* may know that thou, whose name alone *is* JEHOVAH, *art* the most high over all the earth.

16. "*Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O Lord.*" Shame has often weaned men from their idols, and set them upon seeking the Lord. If this was not the happy result, in the present instance, with the Lord's enemies, yet it would be so with his people who were so prone to err. They would be humbled by his mercy, and ashamed of themselves because of his grace; and then they would with sincerity return to the earnest worship of Jehovah their God, who had delivered them.

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17. Where no good result followed, and the men remained as fierce and obstinate as ever, justice was invoked to carry out the capital sentence. "*Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish*" What else could be done with them? It was better that they perished than that Israel should be rooted up. What a terrible doom it will be to the enemies of God to be "confounded, and troubled for ever,"—to see all their schemes and hopes defeated, and their bodies and souls full of anguish without end: from such a shameful perishing may our souls be delivered.

18. "*That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.*" Hearing of the Lord's marvellous deeds in defeating such a numerous confederacy, the very heathen would be compelled to acknowledge the greatness of Jehovah. We read in 2 Chron. xx. 30, that the fear of God was on all the neighbouring kingdoms when they heard that Jehovah fought against the enemies of Israel. Jehovah is essentially the Most High. He who is self-existent is infinitely above all creatures, all the earth is but his footstool. The godless race of man disregards this, and yet at times the wonderful works of the Lord compel the most unwilling to adore his majesty.

Thus has this soul-stirring lyric risen from the words of complaint to those of adoration; let us in our worship always seek to do the same. National trouble called out the nation's poet laureate, and well did he discourse at once of her sorrows, and prayers, and hopes. Sacred literature thus owes much to sorrow and distress. How enriching is the hand of adversity!

The following attempt to versify the Psalm, and tune it to gospel purposes, is submitted with great diffidence.

O God, be thou no longer still,
Thy foes are leagued against thy law;
Make bare thine arm on Zion's hill,
Great Captain of our Holy War.

As Amalek and Ishmael
Had war for ever with thy seed,
So all the hosts of Rome and hell
Against thy Son their armies lead.

Though they're agreed in nought beside,
Against thy truth they all unite;
They rave against the Crucified,
And hate the gospel's growing might.

By Kishon's brook all Jabin's band
At thy rebuke were swept away;
O Lord, display thy mighty hand,
A single stroke shall win the day.

Come, rushing wind, the stubble chase!
Come, sacred fire, the forests burn!
Come, Lord, with all thy conquering grace,
Rebellious hearts to Jesus turn!

That men may know at once that thou,
Jehovah, lovest truth right well;
And that thy church shall never bow
Before the boastful gates of hell.

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EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*A Song* or *Psalm.*" When the two words (*Shir*, *Mizmor*,) occur together, the meaning seems to be, *a lyric poem appointed to be sung.*—*John Jebb.*

Title.—This Psalm, according to the title, was composed by Asaph. In accordance with this, we read, in 1 Chron. xx. 14, that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jehasiel, of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. This Jehasiel is probably the author of the Psalm. Our Psalm is a true picture of the state of feeling which prevailed throughout the people during the danger under Jehoshaphat. According to the history of Chronicles, they praised God at that time, in the midst of their danger, with loud voice, ver. 19; and here in the title, which is an appendage to that of Ps. xlviii., the Psalm is called a *song of praise;* and it is such in reality, although it bears the form of a *prayer*, —a song of triumph sung before the victory,—no contest, no doubt, the distress is simply committed to God.

The mention of the *Amalekites* among the enemies of Israel, in ver. 7, renders it impossible to come down to times later than that of Jehoshaphat. The last remains of the Amalekites were, according to 1 Chron, iv. 43, rooted out by the Simeonites, under Hezekiah. From that time they disappear altogether from history. Ewald's assertion that Amalek stands here "only as a name of infamy applied to parties well-known at the time," is to be considered as a miserable shift. The Psalm must have been composed previous to the extension of the empire of the Assyrians over Western Asia. For the Assyrians named last, in the eighth verse, appear here in the very extraordinary character of an ally of the sons of Lot.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 1.—"*Keep not thou O silence, O God.*" In Scripture there are three reasons why the Lord *keeps silence* when his people are in danger, and *sits still* when there is most need to give help and assistance. One is, the Lord doth it *to try their faith*, as we clearly see, Matthew viii. 24, where it is said that our Lord Christ *was asleep:* "There arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish." We read more fully in Mark iv. and Luke viii., he left them, when the ship was covered with waves, and they were rowing for their lives, their Lord was *asleep* the while, and he said to them, "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that you have no faith? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Truly, the Lord will not suffer his people to be *overwhelmed*, that is certain, but he will suffer them to come very near, that the waves *cover* them, and fear and horror shall cover their souls, and all *to try their faith.* . . . . . 2. I find another reason in Isaiah lix., and that is, the Lord doth keep silence in the midst of the troubles of his people, *to try men's uprightness*, and discover who will stick to God, and his cause, and his people, out of *uprightness of heart.* For if God should always *appear* for his cause, God and his cause should have many favourites and friends; but sometimes God leaves his cause, and leaves his people, and leaves his gospel, and his ordinances to the wide world, to see who will plead for it and stick to it. . . . . 3. There is a third reason: God, as it were, *keeps silence* in the midst of the greatest troubles, that he may, as it were, *gather the wicked into one fagot, into one bundle, that they may be destroyed together.* There is a great deal of ado to "*gather the saints*" in this world; and truly there is some ado to gather the *wicked.* So God withdraws himself from his people, yet he hath a *hook* within their hearts, he holds them up secretly by his Spirit, that they shall not leave him; yet the world shall not see but that God hath quite *left* them, and all their ordinances and his gospel and everything; and there the wicked *come together* and insult, whereby God may come upon them *at once*, and destroy them, as we find ten nations in the Psalm. And so in Genesis

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God stirs up the nations against Abraham and his posterity, and there are ten nations that God promised to cut off before Abraham at once, the Perizzites, and the Jebuzites, and the Canaanites, etc. So God *heaps them together*, and burns them like stubble. Those that burn stubble have *rakes*, and they gather it *to heaps*, and then they fire it. This is the way of *God's keeping silence* among his people, and *sitting still* in the midst of their miseries, thus God gathers their enemies in heaps as stubble, that he may burn them together.—*Gualter* [*Walter*] *Cradock, in* "*Divine Drops.*" 1650.

Verse 1.—"*Keep not thou silence,*" etc.—The Hebrew words have great emphasis, and express the main *causes* of silence—closing the mouth, deafness of the ears, and a tranquility maintained to such an extent as to reject all disquietude. The first clause, let not thy *mouth* be closed, and thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth immovably, properly denotes, from the inherent force of the word דמי whose root means to *fix to* and compact firmly, what is fastened with *lime* or daubed with plaster. . . . The second clause, "*be not thou deaf,*" properly pertains to the ears, as Mich. vii. 16, "*Their ears shall be deaf.*" The third. "*be not still,*" suggests the course of the thoughts of the mind when it is brought to a state of clear tranquility, all cares and commotions being laid aside. The word שקט is properly *to settle, to settle down*, as when the disturbed dregs of liquor settle down and seek the bottom, whence it is applied to the mind when freed from a great fermentation of cares and the sediment of anxieties and bitterness, a mind serene, clear, and refined. . . .

Let us now see what the poet had in mind when he poured out these prayers, or what he wished to indicate. He hinted, that the people were reduced to these earnest entreaties, because unless God should speedily bring help to them, it might seem that Jehovah, the God of Israel, is like the false gods, a sort of deity, either mute, or deaf, or at his ease.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 1.—Is the Lord silent? Then be not thou silent; but cry unto him till he breaks the silence.—*Starke, in Lange's Bibelwerk.*

Verse 1.—The reference to "*tumult*" in the following verse gives force to the earnest appeal in this. Amidst all the tumult of gathering foes, he earnestly calls on God to break his silence, and to speak to them in wrath.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 2.—"*For, lo.*" The prayer begins with the particle "*lo,*" which has not only the force of *arousing* God, but also gives the idea of *something present*, with the view of pointing out the opportune moment for God to gird himself for the work.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 2.—"*Thine enemies make a tumult.*" The whole world is but like an *army*, a *brigade* of men (as it were) under a *general;* and God is the Lord of Hosts, that is the Lord of *his armies:* now when there is a tumult in an army, they complain to the *officers*, to the *general* especially; and he must come and suppress it. Therefore, saith he, Thou Lord of hosts, thou art general of the world; lo, there is a *tumult* in the world, a *mutiny.*—*Walter Cradock.*

Verse 3.—"*Thy hidden ones.*" This representation of God's people is worthy our notice. It may be taken two ways. First, As referring to their *safety.* We often hide only to preserve. This is the meaning of the word in the parable, with regard to the discovery of the treasure in the field; "which, when a man hath found, he hideth it." His aim is not to conceal but to secure; and the cause is put for the effect. Thus God's people are hidden. He hid Noah in the Ark, and the waters that drowned the world could not *find* him. When his judgments were coming over the land, "Come, my people," saith he, "enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thee also for a little season, until the indignation be overpast." Hence the promise, "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." Hence the confidence expressed by David, "In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon

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a rock." The Saviour could say, "In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me." And, "All the saints are in his hand." They are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. For he himself is their "refuge," their "hiding-place." They are his "*hidden ones.*"

Secondly. As intimating their *concealment.* This is not absolute. But it holds in various respects and degrees. It is true with regard to the nature of their *spiritual life.* Our life, says the Apostle, is hid with Christ in God; and that he refers to its invisibleness, rather than to its safety, is obvious from the words following: "When he who is our life shall *appear, we* also shall *appear* with him in glory." . . . The heart of the believer only knows his own bitterness; and a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy. The manna on which he feeds is hidden manna. And no one knoweth the new name in the white stone given him, but the receiver. . . .

They are sometimes hidden by *persecution.* For though this does not prevent their being Christians, it hinders them from appearing as such; especially by secluding them from their social and public assemblies. . . . . They are sometimes hidden by the obscurity of their stations. Not many of the wise, and mighty, and noble are called: but when they *are* called, they are also *exhibited.* They are like cities set on hills, which cannot be hid. A little religion in high life goes a great way, and is much talked of, because it is so often a strange thing. But God has chosen the poor of this world; and they are often rich in faith. Yet how is their moral wealth to be known? How few opportunities have they for religious display or exertion! There may be the principle of benevolence, where there is no ability to give. And the Lord seeth the heart, but men can only judge from actions. Many who are great in the sight of the Lord are living in cottages and hovels; and are scarcely known, unless to a few neighbours equally obscure.

They are sometimes hidden by their *disposition.* They are reserved, and shrink back from notice. They are timid and self-diffident. This restrains them in religious conversation, especially as it regards their own experience. This keeps them from making a profession of religion, and joining a Christian church. Joseph of Arimathæa was a disciple of Jesus; but secretly, for fear of the Jews. And Nicodemus, from the same cause, came to Jesus by night. They had difficulties in their situations, from which others were free. They ought to have overcome them; and so they did at last, but it was a day of small things with them at first. Others are circumstanced and tried in a similar way: and we must be patient towards all men.

They are sometimes hidden by their *infirmities.* We would not plead for sin; but grace may be found along with many imperfections. The possessors have what is essential to religion in them; but not everything that is ornamental, and lovely, and of good report.

The same will also apply to *errors.* Here, again, we are far from undervaluing divine truth. It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. But it is impossible for us to say how much ignorance, and how many mistakes, may be found, even in the Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile.—*William Jay.*

Verse 3.—The less the world knows thee, the better for thee; thou mayst be satisfied with this one thing—God knows them that are his: not lost, although *hidden* is the symbol of a Christian.—*Frisch, in Lange's Bibelwerk.*

Verse 4.—"*That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.*" This desperate and dreadful scheme, and wretched design of theirs, took not effect; but, on the contrary, the several nations hereafter mentioned, who were in this conspiracy, are no more, and have not had a name in the world for many hundreds of years; whilst the Jews are still a people and are preserved, in order to be called and saved, as all Israel will be in the latter day, Rom. xi. 25. So Diocletian thought to have rooted the Christian name out of the world; but in vain.—*John Gill.*

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Verse 5.—"*For they have consulted together with one consent.*" Margin, as in Hebrew, *heart*. There is no division in their counsels on this subject. They have one *desire*—one *purpose*—in regard to the matter. Pilate and Herod were made friends together against Christ (Luke xxiii. 12); and the world, divided and hostile in other matters, has been habitually united in its opposition to Christ and to a pure and spiritual religion.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 5.—"*They have consulted together with one consent,*" etc. To push on this unholy war, they lay their heads together, and their horns, and their hearts too. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri.* Do the enemies of the church act with one consent to destroy it? Are the kings of the earth of one mind to give their power and honour to the beast? And shall not the church's friends be unanimous in serving her interests? If Herod and Pilate are made friends that they may join in crucifying Christ, sure Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Peter, will soon be made friends, that they may join in preaching Christ.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5.—"*They have consulted together,*" etc. Though there may fall out a private grudge betwixt such as are wicked, yet they will all agree and unite against the saints: if two greyhounds are snarling at a bone, yet put up a hare between them, and they will leave the bone, and follow after the hare; so, if wicked men have private differences amongst themselves, yet if the godly be near them, they will leave snarling at one another, and will pursue after the godly.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 5.—"*They are confederate against thee.*" "They have made a covenant," ברית יכריתו, *berith yachrithu*, "they have cut the covenant sacrifice." They have slain an animal, divided him in twain, and passed between the pieces of the victim; and have thus bound themselves to accomplish their purpose.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 6.—"*The tabernacles of Edom,*" etc. The prophet having entered his suit and complaint in general, he comes to particulars, and tells God who they are that had done this. God might say, Who are these that conspire against me, and against my people, and hidden ones? Lord, saith the prophet, I will tell thee who they are. . . . He names some *ten nations* that joined together against *one poor Israel.* It is a thing you should observe, that when the people of God are conspired against, God rests not in *general complaints*, but he will know *who* they are. As I told you, He is the Lord of Hosts, the great *general.* When there is a mutiny the general asks, what officer, or what corporal, or what sergeant, or who did begin the mutiny? and it is a fearful thing when the poor persecuted saint shall bring thy name as a persecutor before the God of heaven. When a poor saint shall go home and say, There is a confederacy in London, a conspiracy against the saints of God; and when a poor saint shall say, such a magistrate, such a minister, such a man in such a street, such a woman set her husband against the saints, and against thine ordinances; it is a fearful thing. Therefore I remember a blessed woman, if it be true that is reported of her in the *Book of Martyrs*, that when the wicked abused her, and reproached her, and oppressed her, she would say no more but this, "I will go home and tell my Father" give over, or else I will bring your names before God, and tell him: there was all, and that was enough; for he would presently take it up. A man may better bear a pound of dirt on his *feet*, than a grain of dirt in his *eye;* the saints are "the apple of God's eye."—*Walter Cradock.*

Verse 6.—"*Hagarenes.*" These people dwelt on the east of Gilead; and were nearly destroyed in the days of Saul, being totally expelled from their country, 1 Chron. v. 10, but afterwards recovered some strength and consequence.—*Adam Clarke,*

Verses 6, 7, 8.—It may be observed that these were on all sides of the land of Israel; the Edomites, Ishmaelites, and Amalekites, were on the south; the Moabites, Ammonites, and Hagarenes, were on the east; the Assyrians on the north; and the Philistines, Gebalites, and Tyrians, on the west; so that Israel was surrounded on all sides with enemies, as the Lord's people are troubled on

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every side, 2 Cor. iv. 8; and so the Gog and Magog army, of which some understand this, will encompass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city, Rev. xx. 9.—*John Gill.*

Verses 6—8.—The enemies of Israel, as enumerated by the psalmist, fall into four main divisions: 1st, those most nearly connected with the Israelites themselves by the ties of blood-relationship, the descendants of Esau and Ishmael; 2ndly, the two branches of the descendants of Lot along with their respective Arabian auxiliaries, viz., the Moabites, who had engaged the assistance of the Hagarenes, and the Ammonites, who had gathered round their standard the Giblites and Amalekites; 3rdly, the inhabitants of the coast, the Philistines and Tyrians; 4thly, the more distant Assyrians.

Of all these the bitterest in their hostility to Israel were those who were the most nearly allied to them in blood,—the Edomites. Their hostility was founded upon hatred. From their conduct to the Israelites through a long course of years it would seem as though in them were lastingly perpetuated that older hatred wherewith their forefather Esau had hated Jacob because of Isaac's blessing. And though they had once and again succeeded, according to the prophecy, in breaking Israel's yoke from off their neck, yet they never could wrest away from Israel the possession of the birthright, and with it of the promises, which their ancestors had profanely despised: from Israel, not from Edom, was the Redeemer of the world to spring, and in Israel were all the families of the earth to be blessed. The Edomites may accordingly be appropriately viewed as the types of those whom the Church of Christ has ever found her bitterest foes, the sceptics who have refused to acknowledge that redemption through a personal Redeemer, on which, as on a basis, the church is founded, whose intellectual pride is offended by the humbling doctrines of Christianity, and who hate those that hold them for their possession of blessings which *they* have wilfully neglected; whose human learning has nevertheless all along been subservient on the whole to the edification of the church, in spite of the violence with which they have striven, and for a while, as it would sometimes appear, successfuly, to gain the mastery over her by opposing her, and to exercise a temporary dominion. Dwelling themselves in tabernacles, they cannot bear that others, more blessed than they, should have the houses of God in possession: "owning themselves to be astray, and unable to find the way to the truth, they are yet most importunate and imperious that others should come away from the ancient paths, and try to join them, or at least, wander as they are wandering." In conjunction with the Edomites, the psalmist makes mention of the Ishmaelites. And these, as the descendants of the bondwoman, may fitly represent those Jewish opponents of Christianity, still, perhaps, locally, if not generally, formidable, who in their rejection of Christian doctrine have been swayed by the same feelings of intellectual pride as the sceptics of Christian descent; who professing to hold fast to that covenant of Mount Sinai which gendereth to bondage, persecuted, so long as they were able, those born after the Spirit. . . . .

In the descendants of Lot and their Arabian auxiliaries, we have the types of a different class of foes. The historical origin of the former marks them as the appropriate representatives of the slaves of sinful lusts; who hate the church not for the humbling tone of her doctrines, but for the standard of holiness which she exacts and for which she is continually witnessing. And experience shews how such persons are wont, in their attacks upon the church, to enlist into their service those who are more wildly, but at the same time more ignorantly, unholy than themselves; how in order, if possible, to uproot those fences and safeguards of the law of holiness on which, having transgressed them, they hate to look, they appeal to the unbridled passions of the lawless multitude by whom the very existence of the fences had been utterly disregarded.

From the enemies of the Church who are animated by feelings of positive hatred we pass to those who act from calculation rather than passion, and whose

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proceedings are all directed with a view to their own earthly aggrandisement. The Philistines and Tyrians had engaged in the hostile confederacy with the hope of obtaining Israelitish captives, from whom they might reap a profit by selling them abroad as slaves. It does not appear that they regarded the Israelites in themselves with other feelings than those of mere selfish indifference.

Both nations had tendered their services to Israel in the days of Israel's prosperity; for the Philistines had probably furnished the Cherethites and Pelethites of David's body-guard, and the Tyrians had furnished Solomon with materials and workmen for the building of the temple: both nations were now seeking to enrich themselves at Israel's expense in the days of Israel's adversity. And these then are the fitting types of all who in their varying professions of friendliness or hostility to the Church of God are actuated by the mere mercenary desire of lucre; favouring, and even zealously favouring her interests, when they can procure a good recompense for their services; unhesitatingly combining with her bitterest enemies to vilify and despoil her, whenever the opportunity offer of increasing their worldly substance thereby.

The last class of enemies are those of whom Assyria is the type; the worldly potentates, whether ecclesiastical or temporal, papal or imperial, who are unscrupulously ready to employ all means for the ultimate accomplishment of their one object, that of extending and consolidating their dominion. . . . .

Such potentates seem to represent most truly that determined and resolute selfishness, which, to eyes that are not dazzled by the grandeur of its proportions or the gorgeousness in which it is arrayed, must ever appear as one of the most terrible embodiments of the enmity of the world to God. Pride of intellect and unbelief,—unholiness and lawlessness of life,—covetousness,—worldly ambition,—such are the characteristics of four important classes of those by whom God's church is threatened.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 7.—"*Gebal.*" 1. It is generally supposed to indicate the mountainous tract extending from the Dead Sea southward to Petra, still named *Jebâl.* But some of the best writers identify it with No. 2, as mentioned in conjunction with Tyre. 2. A place spoken of in connection with Tyre, Ezek. xxvii. 9. Most probably the residence of the Giblites, and therefore to the north of Palestine, Josh. xiii. 5. The Giblites were employed by Hiram, king of Tyre, in preparing materials for Solomon's temple, 1 Kings v. 18, margin.

The Greek name of this place was Byblus. The town is called *Jebeil,* and has a population of about six hundred. It is about seventeen miles north of Beyroot. The ancient ruins are very extensive. Immense numbers of granite columns are strewn about in the village and over the surrounding fields. These columns are mostly small, varying from one foot to two feet in diameter. Some of the stones measure nearly twenty feet in length. The citadel is the most remarkable ruin. The port is nearly choked up with sand and ruins.—*George H. Whitney's "Hand-Book of Bible Geography."* 1872.

Verse 8.—"*Assur also,*" etc. This determines the date of this Psalm to the latter times of the Jewish kingdom; for the other nations here mentioned had molested them before, but the Assyrians not till towards the end.—*William Wall,* 1645 or 1646—1727–8.

Verse 9.—"*Do unto them as unto the Midianites.*" That is, dash their heads together, make their policies to cross one another.—*Walter Cradock.*

Verse 9.—"*The brook of Kison.*" The river Kishon traverses the plain [of Esdraelon] and terminates in the Bay of Acre or Akka. This is the stream regarding which it is written, after Barak and Deborah had gained their victory over Sisera, "The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength." Although it is now no insignificant stream, yet it needs heavy rains to make it really considerable in magnitude: it is very unequal in size, and seems to be only

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temporary in its character. At any rate, when Robinson passed its head waters in midsummer, he found the channels all dry, and they had been so for a whole year. On the other hand, in the winter the waters are often exceedingly abundant: particularly in the northern and southern chief tributaries; so that, in 1799, at the time of the French invasion, many of the vanquished Turks perished in the floods which swept down from Deburieh, and which inundated the plain. It was a scene like that described in Judges v. regarding the fate of Sisera's hosts.—*Carl Ritter* (1779—1859), *in "The Comparative Geography of Palestine and the Sinaitic Peninsula." Translated by William L. Gage.* 1866.

Verse 10.—"*They became as dung for the earth.*" The land was enriched or made fertile by their flesh, their blood, and their bones.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 10.—"*They became as dung for the earth.*" In the year 1830, it is estimated that more than a million bushels of "human and inhuman bones" were imported from the continent of Europe into the port of Hull. The neighbourhood of Leipsic, Austerlitz, Waterloo, etc., where the principal battles were fought some fifteen or twenty years before, were swept alike of the bones of the hero, and the horse which he rode. Thus collected from every quarter, they were shipped to Hull, and thence forwarded to the Yorkshire bone-grinders, who, by steam-engines and powerful machinery, reduced them to a granulary state. In this condition they were sent chiefly to Doncaster, one of the largest agricultural markets of the country, and were there sold to the farmers to manure their lands. The oily substance gradually evolving as the bone calcines, makes better manure than almost any other substance—particularly human bones.—*K. Arvine.*

Verse 11.—The word *nobles* is placed in antithesis with the names *Oreb* and *Zeeb.* The word נדיבים nobles, denotes properly *liberal, munificent,* and *beneficent* men, such as princes and potentates ought to be among men, but the names *Oreb* and *Zeeb* have the very opposite signification, for the one signifies a *raven,* the other a *wolf.* When into such rapacious and truculent beasts their nobles have degenerated, as a just reward the hostile shock shall come upon them.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 13.—"*A wheel.*" What sort of vegetable is this whose stems our muleteers are cutting up and chewing with so much relish? It is a wild artichoke. We can amuse ourselves with it and its behaviour for a while, and may possibly extract something more valuable than the insipid juice of which our men are so fond. You observe that in growing it throws out numerous branches of equal size and length in all directions, forming a sort of sphere or globe a foot or more in diameter. When ripe and dry in autumn, these branches become rigid and light as a feather, the parent stem breaks off at the ground, and the wind carries these vegetable globes whithersoever it pleaseth. At the proper season thousands of them come scudding over the plain rolling, leaping, bounding with vast racket, to the dismay both of the horse and his rider. Once, on the plain north of Hamath, my horse became quite unmanageable among them. They charged down upon us on the wings of the wind, which broke them from their moorings, and sent them careering over the desert in countless numbers. Our excellent native itinerant, A—— F——, had a similar encounter with them on the eastern desert beyond the Hauran, and his horse was so terrified that he was obliged to alight and lead him. I have long suspected that this wild artichoke is the *gulgal,* which, in Psalm lxxxiii. 13, is rendered "*wheel,*" and in Isaiah xvii. 13, "*a rolling thing.*" Evidently our translators knew not what to call it. The first passage reads thus: "O my God, make them like a wheel—*gulgal*—as the stubble before the wind," and the second, "Rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing—*gulgal*—before

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the whirlwind." Now, from the nature of the parallelism, the *gulgal* cannot be a "*wheel*," but something corresponding to chaff. It must also be something that does not fly like the chaff, but in a striking manner *rolls* before the wind. The signification of *gulgal* in Hebrew and its equivalent in other Shemitic dialects, requires this, and this rolling artichoke meets the case most emphatically, and especially when it rolls before the whirlwind. In the encounter referred to north of Hamath, my eyes were half blinded with the stubble and chaff which filled the air; but it was the extraordinary behaviour of this "*rolling thing*" that riveted my attention. Hundreds of these globes, all bounding like gazelles in one direction over the desert, would suddenly wheel short round at the bidding of a counter-blast, and dash away with equal speed on their new course. An Arab proverb addresses this "rolling thing" thus: "Ho! 'akkûb, where do you put up to-night?" to which it answers as it flies, "Where the wind puts up." They also derive one of their many forms of cursing from this plant: "May you be whirled, like the 'akkûb, before the wind, until you are caught in the thorns, or plunged into the sea." If this is not the "*wheel*" of David, and the "*rolling thing*" of Isaiah, from which they also borrowed their imprecations upon the wicked, I have seen nothing in the country to suggest the comparison.—*W. M. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book."*

Verse 13.—"*Make them like a wheel.*" That is, cause them to fall into such great calamities that they can find no counsel or remedy for their misfortunes, and that they may run hither and thither like a wheel or a ball, and yet see not where they ought to stop, or whither they ought to escape. Such are the minds of wicked men in calamities, wherever they turn they find no harbour wherein to rest, no certain consolation can they discover. They are tossed with perpetual disquietude; by running hither and thither and seeking various remedies they but weary themselves the more and plunge themselves the more deeply in their woes. This must necessarily happen to those who seek to cure evil with evil. Therefore Isaiah also says, *the wicked are like the troubled sea.—Mollerus.*

Verse 13.—"*Like a wheel.*" Mortals, like cylinders, are rolled hither and thither, oppressed with innumerable ills. *Aurea Carmina.—Pythagoras* (?)

Verse 13.—There is no greater evidence against error, than that it is not constant to itself, no greater argument against these pretended great spirits, than that they cannot sit, know not where to fix, are always moving, as if the psalmist's curse had taken hold of them, as if God had made them "*like a wheel and as stubble before the wind,*" that can sit nowhere, rest at nothing, but turn about from one uncertainty to another. The Holy Spirit is a spirit that will sit still, and be at peace, continue and abide.—*Mark Frank.*

Verses 13, 14.—In imagery both obvious and vivid to every native of the gusty hills and plains of Palestine, though to us comparatively unintelligible, the psalmist describes them as driven over the uplands of Gilead like the clouds of chaff blown from the threshing-floors; chased away like the spherical masses of dry weeds which course over the plains of Esdraelon and Philistia—flying with the dreadful hurry and confusion of the flames, that rush and leap from tree to tree and hill to hill when the wooded mountains of a tropical country are by chance ignited.—*William Smith, in "A Dictionary of the Bible."* 1863.

Verse 14.—"*Mountains on fire.*" Many of the mountains in this country are covered with dense forests. The leaves which fall every autumn accumulate, sometimes for years, until we have a particularly dry summer, when, somehow or other, either by accident or design, they are always set on fire, and burn sometimes for several days. The mountains in one of the States of the neighbouring Republic are on fire at this very moment while I am now writing, and have been burning for more than a week, and we can distinctly see the red glare in the sky above them, although from their great distance, even the tops of the mountains themselves from whence the flames arise are beyond the limits of

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our horizon.—*From "Philip Musgrave: or Memoirs of a Church of England Missionary in the North American Colonies."* 1846.

Verse 14.—"*Fire*" has greater force on a *mountain*, where the wind is more powerful, than upon a *wood* situated in a valley.—*Honorius Augustodunensis.*

Verse 14.—Humboldt saw forests on fire in South America and thus describes them. "Several parts of the vast forests which surround the mountain, had taken fire. Reddish flames, half enveloped in clouds of smoke, presented a very grand spectacle. The inhabitants set fire to the forests, to improve the pasturage, and to destroy the shrubs that choke the grass. Enormous conflagrations, too, are often caused by the carelessness of the Indians, who neglect, when they travel, to extinguish the fires by which they have dressed their food."

Verse 14.—Let us pray the divine aid to break this power and enmity of the natural man; that it may yield unto the word of grace; and let the wood, hay and stubble of all false doctrine perish before the brightness of the face of God. —*Edward Walter.* 1854.

Verse 18.—"*That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH,*" etc. Early English History informs us, that some bloodthirsty persecutors were marching on a band of Christians. The Christians, seeing them approaching, marched out towards them, and at the top of their voices, shouted, "Hallelujah, hallelujah!" (Praise Jehovah). The name of the Lord being presented, the rage of the persecutors abated. Josephus says, that the Great Alexander, when on his triumphal march, being met near Jerusalem by the Jewish high priest, on whose mitre was engraved the name of Jehovah, "approached by himself and adored that name," and was disarmed of his hostile intent. There was significance and power in the glorious old name as written by the Jews. But the name of Jesus is now far more mighty in the world than was the name Jehovah in these earlier ages.—"*The Dictionary of Illustrations,*" 1872.

Verse 18.—"*JEHOVAH*" is one of the incommunicable names of God, which signifies his eternal essence. The Jews observe that in God's name *Jehovah* the Trinity is implied. *Je* signifies the present tense, *ho* the preterperfect tense, *vah*, the future. The Jews also observe that in his name Jehovah all the Hebrew letters are *literæ quiescentes*, that denote rest, implying that in God and from God is all our rest. Every gracious soul is like Noah's dove, he can find no rest nor satisfaction but in God. God alone is the godly man's ark of rest and safety. Jehovah is the incommunicable name of God, and is never attributed to any but God: "*Thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH.*"

Verse 18.—"*The most high.*" His being the High and lofty One, notes forth the transcendancy and super-excellency of his divine being in himself, and that it is utterly of another kind from creatures, and indeed that it only is truly being. When the Psalmist says, "*That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH art the* MOST HIGH *over all the earth,*" he thereby argues his height from his name, that his name is alone Jehovah, and therefore he is most high, and in that very respect. Now Jehovah is the name of his essence, "I AM," and he is MOST HIGH in respect of such a glorious being as is proper alone unto him.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

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HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—The long silence of God, the reasons for it, and our reasons for desiring him to end it.

Verse 3.—"*Thy hidden ones.*" I. Hidden as to their new nature, which is an enigma to men. II. Hidden for protection, as precious things. III. Hidden, for solace and rest. IV. Hidden, because not yet fully revealed.

Verse 4.—The immortality of the church.

Verse 5.—The confederacies of evils against the saints.

Verses 13—15.—The instability, restlessness, and impotence of the wicked; their horror when God deals with them in justice.

Verse 16.—A prayer for the Pope and his priests.

Verse 17.—The righteous fate of persecutors, and troublers.

Verse 18.—The Golden Lesson: how taught, to whom, by whom, through whom?

WORK ON THE EIGHTY-THIRD PSALM.

"*Expositions and Observations on Psalm LXXXIII.,*" in "*Divine Drops distilled from the Fountain of Holy Scriptures: delivered in several Exercises before Sermons, upon Twenty and three Texts of Scripture. By that worthy Gospel Preacher,* GUALTER CRADOCK, *late Preacher at All Hallows Great in London.* . . . 1650."

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PSALM LXXXIV.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—To the Chief Musician upon Gittith. A Psalm for the sons of Korah. *This Psalm well deserved to be committed to the noblest of the sons of song. No music could be too sweet for its theme, or too exquisite in sound to match the beauty of its language. Sweeter than the joy of the wine press, (for that is said to be the meaning of the word rendered* upon Gittith), *is the joy of the holy assemblies of the Lord's house; not even the favoured children of grace, who are like the sons of Korah, can have a richer subject for song than Zion's sacred festivals.*

It matters little when this Psalm was written, or by whom; for our part it exhales to us a Davidic perfume, it smells of the mountain heather and the lone places of the wilderness, where King David must have often lodged during his many wars. This sacred ode is one of the choicest of the collection; it has a mild radiance about it, entitling it to be called The Pearl of Psalms. *If the twenty-third be the most popular, the one-hundred-and-third the most joyful, the one-hundred-and-nineteenth the most deeply experimental, the fifty-first the most plaintive, this is one of the most sweet of the Psalms of Peace.*

Pilgrimages to the tabernacle were a great feature of Jewish life. In our own country, pilgrimages to the shrine of Thomas of Canterbury, and our Ladye of Walsingham, were so general as to affect the entire population, cause the formation of roads, the erection and maintenance of hostelries, and the creation of a special literature; this may help us to understand the influence of pilgrimage upon the ancient Israelites. Families journeyed together, making bands which grew at each halting place; they camped in sunny glades, sang in unison along the roads, toiled together over the hill and through the slough, and, as they went along, stored up happy memories which would never be forgotten. One who was debarred the holy company of the pilgrims, and the devout worship of the congregation, would find in this Psalm fit expression for his mournful spirit.

DIVISION.—*We will make our pauses where the poet or the musician placed them, namely, at the Selahs.*

EXPOSITION.

HOW amiable *are* thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!
2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.
3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, *even* thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.
4 Blessed *are* they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

1. "*How amiable,*" or, How *lovely!* He does not tell us how lovely they were, because he could not. His expressions show us that his feelings were inexpressible. Lovely to the memory, to the mind, to the heart, to the eye, to the whole soul, are the assemblies of the saints. Earth contains no sight so refreshing to us as the gathering of believers for worship. Those are sorry saints who see nothing amiable in the services of the Lord's house. "*Are thy tabernacles.*" The tabernacle had been pitched in several places, and, moreover, was divided into several courts and portions; hence, probably, the plural number is here used. It was all and altogether lovely to David. Outer court, or inner court, he loved every portion of it. Every cord and curtain was dear

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to him. Even when at a distance, he rejoiced to remember the sacred tent where Jehovah revealed himself, and he cried out with exultation while he pictured in fond imagination its sacred services, and solemn rites, as he had seen them in bygone times. Because they are *thy* tabernacles, "*O Lord of hosts,*" therefore are they so dear to thy people. Thy pavilion is the centre of the camp, around which all thy creatures gather, and towards which their eyes are turned, as armies look to the tent of the king. Thou rulest all the companies of creatures with such goodness, that all their hosts rejoice in thy dwelling-place, and the bands of thy saints especially hail thee with joyful loyalty as Jehovah of hosts.

2. "*My soul longeth,*"—it pines, and faints to meet with the saints in the Lord's house. The desire was deep and insatiable—the very soul of the man was yearning for his God. "*Yea, even fainteth;*" as though it could not long hold out, but was exhausted with delay. He had a holy lovesickness upon him, and was wasted with an inward consumption because he was debarred the worship of the Lord in the appointed place. "*For the courts of the Lord.*" To stand once again in those areas which were dedicated to holy adoration was the soul-longing of the psalmist. True subjects love the courts of their king. "*My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*" It was God himself that he pined for, the only living and true God. His whole nature entered into his longing. Even the clay-cold flesh grew warm through the intense action of his fervent spirit. Seldom, indeed, does the flesh incline in the right direction, but in the matter of Sabbath services our weary body sometimes comes to the assistance of our longing heart, for it desires the physical rest as much as the soul desires the spiritual repose. The psalmist declared that he could not remain silent in his desires, but began to cry out for God and his house; he wept, he sighed, he pleaded for the privilege. Some need to be whipped to church, while here is David crying for it. He needed no clatter of bells from the belfry to ring him in, he carried his bell in his own bosom: holy appetite is a better call to worship than a full chime.

3. "*Yea, the sparrow hath found an house.*" He envied the sparrows which lived around the house of God, and picked up the stray crumbs in the courts thereof; he only wished that he, too, could frequent the solemn assemblies and bear away a little of the heavenly food. "*And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young.*" He envied also the swallows whose nests were built under the caves of the priests' houses, who there found a place for their young, as well as for themselves. We rejoice not only in our personal religious opportunities, but in the great blessing of taking our children with us to the sanctuary. The church of God is a house for us and a nest for our little ones. "*Even thine altars, O Lord of hosts.*" To the very altars these free birds drew near, none could restrain them nor would have wished to do so, and David wished to come and go as freely as they did. Mark how he repeats the blessed name of Jehovah of Hosts; he found in it a sweetness which helped him to bear his inward hunger. Probably David himself was with the host, and, therefore, he dwelt with emphasis upon the title which taught him that the Lord was in the tented field as well as within the holy curtains. "*My King and my God.*" Here he utters his loyalty from afar. If he may not tread the courts, yet he loves the King. If an exile, he is not a rebel. When we cannot occupy a seat in God's house, he shall have a seat in our memories and a throne in our hearts. The double "my" is very precious; he lays hold upon his God with both his hands, as one resolved not to let him go till the favour requested be at length accorded.

4. "*Blessed are they that dwell in thy house.*" Those he esteems to be highly favoured who are constantly engaged in divine worship—the canons residentiary, yea, the pew-openers, the menials who sweep and dust. To come and go is refreshing, but to abide in the place of prayer must be heaven below. To be the guests of God, enjoying the hospitalities of heaven, set apart for holy work, screened from a noisy world, and familiar with sacred things—why this is surely

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the choicest heritage a son of man can possess. "*They will be still praising thee.*" So near to God, their very life must be adoration. Surely their hearts and tongues never cease from magnifying the Lord. We fear David here drew rather a picture of what should be than of what is; for those occupied daily with the offices needful for public worship are not always among the most devout; on the contrary, "the nearer the church the further from God." Yet in a spiritual sense this is most true, for those children of God who in spirit abide ever in his house, are also ever full of the praises of God. Communion is the mother of adoration. They fail to praise the Lord who wander far from him, but those who dwell in him are always magnifying him.

"*Selah.*" In such an occupation as this we might be content to remain for ever. It is worth while to pause and meditate upon the prospect of dwelling with God and praising him throughout eternity.

5 Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in thee; in whose heart *are* the ways *of them.*

6 *Who* passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

7 They go from strength to strength, *every one of them* in Zion appeareth before God.

8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.

5. "*Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee.*" Having spoken of the blessedness of those who reside in the house of God, he now speaks of those who are favoured to visit it at appointed seasons, going upon pilgrimage with their devout brethren: he is not, however, indiscriminate in his eulogy, but speaks only of those who heartily attend to the sacred festivals. The blessedness of sacred worship belongs not to half-hearted, listless worshippers, but to those who throw all their energies into it. Neither prayer, nor praise, nor the hearing of the word will be pleasant or profitable to persons who have left their hearts behind them. A company of pilgrims who had left their hearts at home would be no better than a caravan of carcasses, quite unfit to blend with living saints in adoring the living God. "*In whose heart are the ways of them,*" or far better, "*in whose heart are thy ways.*" Those who love the ways of God are blessed. When we have God's ways in our hearts, and our heart in his ways, we are what and where we should be, and hence we shall enjoy the divine approval.

6. "*Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well.*" Traversing joyfully the road to the great assembly, the happy pilgrims found refreshment even in the dreariest part of the road. As around a well men meet and converse cheerfully, being refreshed after their journey, so even in the vale of tears, or any other dreary glen, the pilgrims to the skies find sweet solace in brotherly communion and in anticipation of the general assembly above, with its joys unspeakable. Probably there is here a local allusion, which will never now be deciphered, but the general meaning is clear enough. There are joys of pilgrimage which make men forget the discomforts of the road. "*The rain also filleth the pools.*" God gives to his people the supplies they need while traversing the roads which he points out for them. Where there were no natural supplies from below, the pilgrims found an abundant compensation in waters from above, and so also shall all the sacramental host of God's elect. Ways, which otherwise would have been deserted from want of accommodation, were made into highways abundantly furnished for the travellers' wants, because the great annual pilgrimages led in that direction; even so, Christian converse and the joy of united worship make many duties easy and delightful which else had been difficult and painful.

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7. "*They go from strength to strength.*" So far from being wearied they gather strength as they proceed. Each individual becomes happier, each company becomes more numerous, each holy song more sweet and full. We grow as we advance if heaven be our goal. If we spend our strength in God's ways we shall find it increase. "*Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.*" This was the end of the pilgrims' march, the centre where all met, the delight of all hearts. Not merely to be in the assembly, but to appear before God was the object of each devout Israelite. Would to God it were the sincere desire of all who in these days mingle in our religious gatherings. Unless we realise the presence of God we have done nothing; the mere gathering together is nothing worth.

8. "*O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer.*" Give me to go up to thy house, or if I may not do so, yet let my cry be heard. Thou listenest to the united supplications of thy saints, but do not shut out my solitary petition, unworthy though I be. "*Give ear, O God of Jacob.*" Though Jehovah of hosts, thou art also the covenant God of solitary pleaders like Jacob; regard thou, then, my plaintive supplication. I wrestle here alone with thee, while the company of thy people have gone on before me to happier scenes, and I beseech thee bless me; for I am resolved to hold thee till thou speak the word of grace into my soul. The repetition of the request for an answer to his prayer denotes his eagerness for a blessing. What a mercy it is that if we cannot gather with the saints, we can still speak to their Master.

Selah.—A pause was needed after a cry so vehement, a prayer so earnest.

9 Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.

10 For a day in thy courts *is* better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

11 For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good *thing* will he withold from them that walk uprightly.

12 O LORD of hosts, blessed *is* the man that trusteth in thee.

9. "*Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.*" Here we have the nation's prayer for David; and the believer's prayer for the Son of David. Let but the Lord look upon our Lord Jesus, and we shall be shielded from all harm; let him behold the face of his Anointed, and we shall be able to behold his face with joy. We also are anointed by the Lord's grace, and our desire is that he will look upon us with an eye of love in Christ Jesus. Our best prayers when we are in the best place are for our glorious King, and for the enjoyment of his Father's smile.

10. "*For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.*" Of course the psalmist means a thousand days spent elsewhere. Under the most favourable circumstances in which earth's pleasures can be enjoyed, they are not comparable by so much as one in a thousand to the delights of the service of God. To feel his love, to rejoice in the person of the anointed Saviour, to survey the promises and feel the power of the Holy Ghost in applying precious truth to the soul, is a joy which worldlings cannot understand, but which true believers are ravished with. Even a glimpse at the love of God is better than ages spent in the pleasures of sense. "*I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*" The lowest station in connection with the Lord's house is better than the highest position among the godless. Only to wait at his threshold and peep within, so as to see Jesus, is bliss. To bear burdens and open doors for the Lord is more honour than to

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reign among the wicked. Every man has his choice, and this is ours. God's worst is better than the devil's best. God's doorstep is a happier rest than downy couches within the pavilions of royal sinners, though we might lie there for a lifetime of luxury. Note how he calls the tabernacle "the house of *my* God;" there's where the sweetness lies: if Jehovah be our God, his house, his altars, his doorstep, all become precious to us. We know by experience that where Jesus is within, the outside of the house is better than the noblest chambers where the Son of God is not to be found.

11. "*For the Lord God is a sun and shield.*" Pilgrims need both as the weather may be, for the cold would smite them were it not for the sun, and foes are apt to waylay the sacred caravan, and would haply destroy it if it were without a shield. Heavenly pilgrims are not left uncomforted or unprotected. The pilgrim nation found both sun and shield in that fiery cloudy pillar which was the symbol of Jehovah's presence, and the Christian still finds both light and shelter in the Lord his God. A sun for happy days and a shield for dangerous ones. A sun above, a shield around. A light to show the way and a shield to ward off its perils. Blessed are they who journey with such a convoy; the sunny and shady side of life are alike happy to them. "*The Lord will give grace and glory.*" Both in due time, both as needed, both to the full, both with absolute certainty. The Lord has both grace and glory in infinite abundance; Jesus is the fulness of both, and, as his chosen people, we shall receive both as a free gift from the God of our salvation. What more can the Lord give, or we receive, or desire. "*No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*" Grace makes us walk uprightly and this secures every covenant blessing to us. What a wide promise! Some apparent good may be withheld, but no real good, no, not one. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." God has all good, there is no good apart from him, and there is no good which he either needs to keep back or will on any account refuse us, if we are but ready to receive it. We must be upright and neither lean to this or that form of evil: and this uprightness must be practical,—we must *walk* in truth and holiness, then shall we be heirs of all things, and as we come of age all things shall be in our actual possession; and, meanwhile, according to our capacity for receiving shall be the measure of the divine bestowal. This is true, not of a favoured few, but of all the saints for evermore.

12. "*O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.*" Here is the key of the Psalm. The worship is that of faith, and the blessedness is peculiar to believers. No formal worshipper can enter into this secret. A man must know the Lord by the life of real faith, or he can have no true rejoicing in the Lord's worship, his house, his Son, or his ways. Dear reader, how fares it with thy soul?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—Here note, that the sons, that is, the posterity of wicked and rebellious Korah, have an honourable place in God's sacred and solemn service: for to them sundry of David's psalms are commended. . . . . Here see the verifying of God's word, for the comfort of all godly children, that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, Ezek. xviii. 14, 17, 20, if he see his father's sins and turn from them.—*Thomas Pierson* (1570—1633), *in* "*David's Heart's Desire.*"

Whole Psalm.—

O Lord of hosts, how lovely in mine eyes
The tents where thou dost dwell!
For thine abode my spirit faints and sighs;
The courts I love so well.

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My longing soul is weary
Within thy house to be;
This world is waste and dreary,
A desert land to me.

The sparrow, Lord, hath found a shelter'd home,
The swallow hath her nest;
She layeth there her young, and though she roam,
Returneth there to rest.
I, to thine altar flying,
Would there for ever be;
My heart and flesh are crying,
O living God, for thee!

How blest are they who in thy house abide!
Thee evermore they praise.
How strong the man whom thou alone dost guide,
Whose heart doth keep thy ways.
A pilgrim and a stranger,
He leaneth on thine arm;
And thou, in time of danger,
Dost shield him from alarm.

From strength to strength through Baca's vale of woe,
They pass along in prayer,
And gushing streams of living water flow,
Dug by their faithful care;
Thy rain is sent from heaven
To fertilise the land,
And wayside grace is given
Till they in Zion stand.

Lord God of hosts, attend unto my prayer!
O Jacob's God, give ear!
Behold, O God, our shield, we through thy care,
Within thy courts appear!
Look thou upon the glory
Of thine Anointed's face;
In him we stand before thee,
To witness of thy grace!

One day with thee excelleth o'er and o'er
A thousand days apart;
In thine abode, within thy temple-door,
Would stand my watchful heart.
Men tell me of the treasure
Hid in their tents of sin:
I look not there for pleasure,
Nor choose to enter in.

Own thou the Lord to be thy Sun, thy Shield—
No good will he withhold;
He giveth grace, and soon shall be reveal'd
His glory, yet untold.
His mighty name confessing,
Walk thou at peace and free;
O Lord, how rich the blessing
Of him who trusts in thee!

—*German Choral Music.*

Verse 1.—"*How amiable are thy tabernacles.*" What was there in them that appeared so amiable? Perchance, the edifice was famed for the skill and cost bestowed on it? But the temple of extraordinary beauty was not yet constructed. The tabernacle was lowly, more suited to pilgrims than to a great people, and little becoming the king himself. Therefore to the pious there is no need of vast or sumptuous temples to the end that they should love the house of God.—*Musculus.*

Verse 1.—"*How amiable are thy tabernacles.*" What made the tabernacle of Moses lovely was not the outside, which was very mean, as the Church of God outwardly is, through persecution, affliction, and poverty; but what was

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within, having many golden vessels in it, and those typical of things much more precious; moreover, here the priests were to be seen in their robes, doing their duty and service, and, at certain times, the high priest in his rich apparel; here were seen the sacrifices slain and offered, by which the people were taught the nature of sin, the strictness of justice, and the necessity and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ: here the Levites were heard singing their songs, and blowing their trumpets: but much more amiable are the Church of God and its ordinances in Gospel times, where Christ, the Great High-Priest, is seen in the glories of his person, and the fulness of his grace; where Zion's priests, or the ministers of the gospel, stand clothed, being full fraught with salvation, and the tidings of it; where Christ is evidently set forth, as crucified and slain, in the ministry of the word, and the administration of ordinances; here the gospel trumpet is blown, and its joyful sound echoed forth, and songs of love and grace are sung by all believers; besides, what makes these tabernacles still more lovely are, the presence of God here, so that they are no other than the house of God, the gate of heaven; the provisions that are here made, and the company that is here enjoyed.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—"*Amiable.*" The adjective is rendered by the English versions "*amiable,*" in the sense of the French *aimable*, lovely. But the usage of the Hebrew word requires it to be understood as meaning *dear*, *beloved*, which is exactly the idea here required by the context. The plural, *dwellings*, has reference to the subdivisions and appurtenances of the sanctuary, and is applied to the tabernacle in Ps. xlviii. 3. Compare Ps. lxviii. 35 The divine titles are as usual significant. While one suggests the covenant relation between God and the petitioner, the other makes his sovereignty the ground of a prayer for his protection.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 1.—"*Tabernacles.*" By the name of "*tabernacles*" we are put in mind of the church's peregrination and wandering from one place unto another, until she come unto her true country. For as tabernacle and tents of war be removed hither and thither, so the Church of God in this life hath no sure and quiet abode, but often is compelled to change her seat. This pilgrimage, whereby indeed every man, as Augustine doth say, is a pilgrim in this world, doth admonish us of sin, which is the cause of this peregrination. For, because of sin we are cast with our first parents out of Paradise into the land wherein we sojourn. So that we are removed from Jerusalem, that is, from the sight and fruition of peace, into Babylon, that is, into confusion and exile, wherein we wander far and wide.—*Nicholas Heminge* [*Hemmingius*] (1513—1600), *in* "*The Faith of the Church Militant.*"

Verses 1, 2.—When we cannot express the greatness of a thing in direct terms, we are fain to fly to wonder, and so doth David here, because he cannot express sufficiently how amiable the Tabernacles of the Lord are, he therefore falls to wondering, and helps himself with a question; How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts? But is not David's wondering itself wonderful, that the tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts should be so wonderfully amiable? Is it not a wonder they should be amiable at all? For are not his tabernacles tents of war? and is there anything in war that can be amiable? If he had said: How *terrible* are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts; his wonder had been with some congruity; for the Lord of Hosts is terrible in all his works; but to say, How *amiable* are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts, seems to imply a contradiction; for though they may be amiable, as they are tabernacles, yet they must needs be terrible, as they are Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts; and when this terribleness hath made an abatement in their amiableness, what place will be left for wonder, to give cause to say, How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts? But if he had said, How terrible are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts; though it might have been wonderful in the degree, yet it could not be wonderful in the kind: for what wonder is it, if the Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts be terrible? But when he saith, How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts; this is not only wonderful in the degree, but in

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the kind much more. For what can be more wonderful, than that being Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts, they should be amiable, and so amiable as to be wondered at? But is it not, that God is in himself so amiable, that all things of His, even his terrors themselves, are amiable; his tabernacles and his tents, his sword and his spear, his darts and his arrows, all amiable; terrible no doubt to his enemies, but amiable, wonderfully amiable to all that love and fear him, and great reason they should be so, seeing they are all in their defence, and for their safeguard; though they be Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts to the wicked, yet they are Courts of the Prince of Peace to the godly, and this makes *my soul to long for the courts of the Lord.* For I desire indeed to be a courtier, yet not as I am now: God knows I am very unfit for it, but because God's Courts are such, they make any one fit, that but comes into them; they receive not men fit, but make them fit, and he that was before but a shrub in Baca, as soon as he comes into the Courts of the Lord is presently made a cedar in Lebanon.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 2.—"*My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth,*" etc. Every amiableness is not so great to make a longing, nor every longing so great to make a fainting; nor every fainting so great, to make the soul to faint; Oh, then, consider how great this amiableness is, which makes my soul not only to long, but to faint with longing! And blame me not for fainting, as though it were my own fault for not restraining my longing; for seeing his Tabernacles are of infinite amiableness, they must needs work in me an infinite delighting, and that delighting an infinite longing; and what restraint can there be of that which is infinite? No, alas, my fainting is but answerable to my longing, and my longing but answerable to the amiableness. If I had the offer made me, which was made to Christ, to enjoy all the kingdoms of the earth, but with condition to want the Courts of the Lord; this want would bring to my soul a greater grief than that enjoying would give it contentment: for seeing his Tabernacles are so amiable, where He is Lord of Hosts, how amiable must they needs be, where he is Prince of Peace? and Prince of Peace he is in his Courts, though in his camp he be Lord of Hosts.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 2.—"*My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth.*" The word כָּלְתָה (fainteth) signifies to be consumed with longing, as the Latins say, *deperire aliquem amore* (he is dying of love), that is, he so vehemently loves, and is enflamed with so great a desire to obtain the loved object, that he wastes and pines away unless his wish is gratified. Therefore, an ardent longing is meant, which so torments and burns the mind, that flesh and marrow waste away, so long as it is not permitted to enjoy the things desired.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 2.—"*Soul . . . heart . . . flesh.*" Marking the whole man, with every faculty and affection. The verbs are also very expressive. The first, "*longeth,*" means literally, "hath grown pale," as with the intensity of the feeling; the second, "*fainteth,*" is more exactly "faileth," or "is consumed." Job. xix. 27. —*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 2.—"*Crieth.*" The word that is here rendered "*crieth,*" is from רָנַן, that signifies to shout, shrill, or cry out, as soldiers do at the beginning of a battle, when they cry out, Fall on, fall on, fall on, or when they cry out after a victory, Victory, victory, victory! The Hebrew word notes a strong cry, or to cry as a child cries when it is sadly hungry, for now every whit of the child cries, hands cry, and face cries, and feet cry.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 2.—"*Living God.*" Ps. xlii. 2, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God," is the only other place in the Psalms where God is so named. This particular form of expression, *El Chay*, occurs but twice beside in the Bible, Josh. iii. 10; Hosea i. 10.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—"*The sparrow hath found an house,*" etc. The tender care of God, over the least of his creatures, is here most touchingly alluded to. The Psalmist, while in exile, envies them their privileges. He longs to be nestling, as it were,

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in the dwelling-place of God. The believer finds a perfect home and rest in God's altars; or, rather, in the great truths which they represent. Still, his confidence in God is sweetened and strengthened by the knowledge of his minute, universal, providential care. It becomes his admiring delight. "God fails not," as one has beautifully said, "to find a house for the most *worthless*, and a nest for the most *restless* of birds." What confidence this should give us! How we should rest! What repose the soul finds that casts itself on the watchful, tender care of him who provides so fully for the need of all his creatures! We know what the expression of "nest" conveys, just as well as that of "a house." Is it not a place of security, a shelter from storm, a covert to hide oneself in, from every evil, a protection from all that can harm, "a place to rest in, to nestle in, to joy in?" But there is one thing in these highly privileged birds which strikes us forcibly in our meditations—they knew not him from whom all this kindness flowed—they knew neither his heart nor his hand. They enjoyed the rich provisions of his tender care; he thought of everything for their need, but there was no fellowship between them and the Great Giver. From this, O my soul, thou mayest learn a useful lesson. Never rest satisfied with merely frequenting such places, or with having certain privileges there; but rise, in spirit, and seek and find and enjoy direct communion with the living God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The heart of David turns to God himself. "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." —*Things New and Old.*

Verse 3.—"*The swallow a nest,*" etc. The confidence which these birds place in the human race is not a little extraordinary. They not only put themselves, but their offspring in the power of men. I have seen their nests in situations where they were within the reach of one's hand, and where they might have been destroyed in an instant. I have observed them under a doorway, the eaves of a low cottage, against the wall of a tool-shed, on the knocker of a door, and the rafter of a much-frequented hay-loft.—*Edward Jesse, in "Gleanings in Natural History."* 1856.

Verse 3.—"*Even thine altars.*" There were two altars; the "brazen altar," and the "golden altar;" to those, no doubt, the psalmist refers. Both were of shittim wood, which sets forth the holy humanity—the perfect manhood, of the Lord Jesus. Incarnation lies at the foundation of all his work for us, and of all our blessing in him. The one altar was overlaid with brass, the other with pure gold. The *overlaying* shadows forth his Godhead, but in distinct aspects. We have the same Jesus in both, but shadowed forth in different circumstances. In the one, humiliation and suffering; in the other, exaltation and glory.—*Things New and Old.*

Verse 3.—"*Thine altars.*" There is in the original a pathetical, a vehement, a broken expressing, expressed, *O thine altars.* It is true (says David) thou art here in the wilderness, and I may see thee here, and serve thee here, but *O thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God.—John Donne.*

Verse 3.—"*Thine altars*" is a poetical way of saying "*Thy house.*" It is manifestly a special term, instead of a general. Yet it has been seriously argued, that no birds could or would ever be suffered to build their nests on the altar. Surely this sort of expression, which is hardly a figure, is common enough. *A parte potiori fit denominatio.* We say, "There goes a sail." What should we think of a man who should argue that a sail cannot go? The altars mean the temple. There was

> "no jutty frieze,
> Buttress, nor coigne of vantage, but these birds
> Had made their pendant bed;"

not to mention that trees grew within the sacred enclosure, where birds might have built their nests.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3.—A custom, existing among several nations of antiquity, is deemed capable of illustrating the present passage. For birds, whose nests chanced to be built on the temples, or within the limits of them, were not allowed to be

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driven away, much less to be killed, but found there a secure and undisturbed abode.—*William Keating Clay.*

Verse 4.—"*Blessed are they that dwell in thy house,*" etc. Alas, how happens this? There were *tabernacles* before, as belonging to a Lord; and *courts* as belonging to a king, and *altars* as belonging to a God; and now to be but a *house* as belonging to a private man; and so all this great rising to end in a fall? No, my soul, it is no fall, it is an aggregation rather of all the other; for where his *tabernacles* did but serve to shew his power, his *courts* but to shew his majesty; his *altars* but to shew his deity, his *house* serves to shew them all; for in his *house* there will still be praising him, and his praise and glory is the sum of all. Or is it that to dwell in God's house is a kind of appropriating him to ourselves, seeing his tabernacles and his courts lie open to strangers, his house open to none but his servants; and seeing in the nearness to God, and conversing with him, consists all true blessedness; therefore "Blessed are they that dwell in his house," but how dwell in it? Not to look in sometimes as we pass by, or to stay in it a time, as we do at an inn, but to be constant abiders in it day and night, as to which we have devoted ourselves and vowed our service.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 4.—"*Blessed are they that dwell in thy house.*" What was this house more to David than another house, save that here he reckoned upon enjoying the Divine Presence? So that here was a heart so naturalized to this presence as to affect an abode in it, and that he might lead his life with God, and dwell with him all his days; he could not be content with giving a visit now and then. And why should this temper of spirit in the clearer light of the gospel be looked upon as an unattainable thing! A lazy despondency, and the mean conceit that it is modest not to aim so high, starves religion, and stifles all truly noble and generous desires. Let this then be the thing designed with you, and constantly pursue and drive the design, that you may get into this disposition of spirit toward God.—*John Howe.*

Verse 4.—"*Blessed are they that dwell in thy house,*" etc. Blessed indeed, we too may exclaim, and blessed shall they be for ever. They are *dwellers*, not *visitors*, in God's house. "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." This is true, blessedly true, of all who trust in Jesus now. But though God's children are all priests by birth, as were the sons of Aaron, they are not all, alas! priests by consecration. (See Exod. xxix.) Comparatively few know their priestly place at the golden altar. Many of them are doubting as to whether their sins, root and branch, were all consumed outside the camp; and, consequently, such are afraid to come within the court, and as for being assured of their full justification and sanctification in the risen One, they gravely doubt and fear that such blessedness can ever be their happy lot. Hence that state of soul which answers to priestly consecration at the laver, and happy worship at the golden altar, is unknown and unenjoyed. They are not priests by consecration.

Our text is plain.. "*They will still be praising thee.*" Doubts, fears, unsettled questions, all are gone. Such cannot exist in the holy place. All, of course, who are in Christ, must be in God's account where he is; but all who believe in Christ, do not know and believe that they are *in him*, as being *one with him now.* When the state of our souls answers to what is symbolized by the holy place, we can only praise: "They that dwell in thy house will be still praising thee." Then we are happily near to God, and have communion with him, in the glorified Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost.—*Things New and Old.*

Verse 4.—"*They will be still praising thee.*" How appears it to be true, that they who dwell in God's house will always be praising him, seeing it is but seldom seen that servants be so forward to praise their masters? O my soul! it is not so much the good dispositions of the servants, as the infinite worthiness of the Master that makes them to praise him, for when they see the

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admirable economy of his government, when they see how sweetly he disposeth all things in weight and measure, when they find him to use them more like children than servants, what heart can be so ungrateful as not to praise him? And seeing by dwelling in God's house, they see these things continually, therefore they that dwell in his house will always be praising him.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 4.—"*They will be still praising thee.*" As having hearts full of heaven, and consciences full of comfort. There cannot but be music in the temple of the Holy Ghost.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—"*Still praising.*" It is not enough to praise him, it must be a praising him *still*, before it will make a blessedness; and though to praise God be an easy matter, yet *to praise him still*, will be found a busy work, indeed to flesh and blood a miserable work, for if I be still praising him, what time shall I have for any pleasure? O my soul, if thou make it not thy pleasure, thy chief, thy only pleasure to be praising him, thou art not like in haste to come to blessedness. And marvel not that David speaks thus under the law, when St. Paul under the Gospel saith as much: "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, let all be done to the glory and praise of God."—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 5.—"*In whose heart are thy ways.*" That is, who love the ways that lead to thy house.—*Ernest Hawkins.*

Verse 5.—"*In whose heart are the ways of them.*" Literally, "*The steeps are on their hearts.*" The steep ascents on which the tabernacle stood. Horsley renders, "*They are bent on climbing the steep ascents.*" Perhaps the מְסִלּוֹת were more properly the *raised causeways* or stairs leading up to Mount Zion, or all through the mountain country on the road to Jerusalem.—*John Fry.*

Verse 5.—"*In whose heart are the ways.*" The natural heart is a pathless wilderness, full of cliffs and precipices. When the heart is renewed by grace, *a road is made, a highway is prepared for our God.* See Isai. xl. 3, 4.—*Frederick Fysh.*

Verse 6.—"*Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well,*" etc. I consider the valley here mentioned to be the same as the valley of *Bochim*, mentioned in Judges ii. 1, 5, which received its name from the *weeping* of the Jews, when they were rebuked by an angel for their disobedience to the commands of God. This valley is called הַבְּכָאִים, *Habb'caim*, in 2 Sam. v. 24, the ה of בָּכָה *to weep* being changed into א. Josephus mentions, that the circumstance there related occurred ἐν τοῖς ἄλσεσι τοῖς καλουμένοις Κλαυθμῶσι. Antiquit. Jud. lib. vii. c. 4. הַבְּכָאִים, *Habb'caim*, is rendered in that verse by the LXX. Κλαυθμῶν, *weepings;* and in Judges ii. 1 הַבְּכִים, *Habbocim*, is also rendered by the LXX. Κλαυθμῶν, *weepings.* The valley mentioned in Ps. lxxxiv. 6 is called by the LXX. Κλαυθμῶν. I am inclined therefore to think, that in this place, joining to חַבְּכָא the מ of the following word, and supplying ' before it, we ought to read הַבְּכָאִים עֵין instead of הַבָּכָא מְעַיִן. . . All the ancient versionists seem to have thought, that the valley in this verse received its name from בָּכָה, *bacah, to weep.* I translate the verse, "Passing through the valley of Bochim, they will make it a fountain even of blessings; it shall be covered with the former rain." The Psalm has been supposed to have been written by Jehoshaphat. Probably he passed through Bochim, which seems to have been an arid valley, when he marched against the Moabites and Ammonites; see 2 Chron. xx. After the victory, the army of Jehoshaphat assembled in a valley, where they blessed the Lord; and from this circumstance it received the name of Berachah: see ver. 26. Perhaps the word בְּרָכוֹת in this verse has an allusion to that circumstance; and perhaps the valley of Berachah was, before that glorious occasion, called the valley of Bochim.—*Richard Dixon.*

Verse 6.—*Passing through the valley of weeping make him*, that is, Jehovah, *a fountain.* That is, they trust, and from him look for help, who having plain paths in their mind must pass through many difficulties. Similar help is sought

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by those, who, suffering from a scanty supply of water, press on through a dry valley, and yet do not despair or grow weary, but have God for their fountain, from which they drink and are refreshed.—*Venema.*

Verse 6.—"*The valley of Baca.*" Valley of tear-shrubs.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 6.—"*Baca,*" signifieth a mulberry-tree, which loves to grow in dry places that be sandy and barren, 2 Sam. v. 23, 24, or 1 Chron. xiv. 14, 15. Now they whose hearts be set upon God's house and holy worship, when they go thitherward through a sandy, dry, barren valley, do make it a well,—that is, repute and count it as a well, the word שִׁיתוּהוּ, signifieth to put or set, as Gen. iii. 15; Ps. xxi. 6, 12, and lxxxiii. 11, 13. For thus will they say with themselves, thinking upon the comfort of God's favour to whom they go, that it shall be to them as the rain of blessings, a plentiful and liberal rain upon the ground.—*Thomas Pierson.*

Verse 6.—"*Make it a well.*" That which seemed an impediment turns to a furtherance; at least, no misery can be so great, no estate so barren, but a godly heart can make it a well, out of which to draw forth water of comfort; either water to cleanse, and make it a way to repentance; or water to cool, and make it a way to patience; or water to moisten, and make it a way of growing in grace; and if the well happen to be dry, and afford no water from below, *yet the rain shall fill their pools,* and supply them with water from above. If natural forces be not sufficient, there shall be supernatural graces added to assist them, that though troubles of the world seem rubs in the way to blessedness, yet in truth they are none, they hinder not arriving at the mark we aim at, they hinder us not from being made members of Sion, they hinder us not from approaching the presence of God. No, my soul, they are rather helps, for by this means *we go from strength to strength,* from strength of patience, to strength of hope; from strength of hope, to strength of faith, to strength of vision; and then will be accomplished that which David speaks here; "*Blessed is the man whose strength is in God, and in whose heart his ways are.*"—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 6.—"*The rain.*" Little as there may be of water, that little suffices on their way. It is "*a well*" to them. They find only "*pools* (which) *the early rain has* (barely) *covered* "—but are content with the supply by the way. It is as good and sufficient to them as if showers of the heavy autumnal rains had filled the well. Pilgrims forget the scanty supply at an inn, when they have abundance in view at the end. Israelites going up to the Passover made light of deficient water, for their hearts were set on reaching Jerusalem.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verses 6, 7.—The most gloomy present becomes bright to them: passing through even a terrible wilderness, they turn it into a place of springs, their joyous hope and the infinite beauty of the goal, which is worth any amount of toil and trouble, afford them enlivening comfort, refreshing, strengthening in the midst of the arid steppe.

Not only does their faith bring forth water out of the sand and rocks of the desert, but God also on his part lovingly anticipates their love, and rewardingly anticipates their faithfulness: a gentle rain, like that which refreshes the sown fields in the autumn, descends from above and enwraps the valley of Baca in a fulness of blessing. . . . the arid steppe becomes resplendent with a flowery festive garment (Isai. xxxv. 1—19), not to outward appearance, but to them spiritually, in a manner none the less true and real. And whereas under ordinary circumstances, the strength of the traveller diminishes in proportion as he has traversed more and more of his toilsome road, with them it is the very reverse; "*they go from strength to strength.*"—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 7.—"*They go from strength to strength.*" Junius reads it, and so it is in the Hebrew, "They go from company to company." As they went up to Jerusalem they went in troops and companies. Possibly we translate it strength, because much of our safety consisteth in good society.—*George Swinnock.*

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Verse 7.—"*Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.*" That is, every one of them answering to the character described. Others as well as they would appear in Zion before God; but not to enjoy his presence, and receive tokens of his favour. Blessedness was not to be enjoyed, but it could only be enjoyed by those who had been previously fitted for it by character and attainment. As certainly as these had been acquired, so certainly would the blessedness be enjoyed by each and by all of them. "*Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.*" No one has perished by the way—none been devoured by wild beasts—none cut off by the wandering banditti—none become faint hearted and turned back. The whole bands are assembled—young and old, weak and strong; all answer to their names, and testify to the goodness of the Lord in bearing them up, and bringing through—in affording them rest, and yielding them pleasure. So shall it ever be with true spiritual pilgrims. The grace of God will always prove sufficient to preserve them, safe and blameless, to his heavenly kingdom and glory—troubles shall not overwhelm them—temptations not wholly overcome them—spiritual enemies shall not destroy them. They are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Their names are written in the Lamb's book of life, and the Lamb himself shall see to it that each of them is found in the day of account. Then shall he be able to say, "Those whom thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them is lost." "They are all here before God." —*William Makelvie.* 1863.

Verse 8.—There are two distinct thoughts of great practical value to the Christian, in this short prayer. There is the sense of *divine majesty*, and the consciousness of *divine relationship*. As "*Lord of hosts*," he is almighty in power; as the "*God of Jacob*," he is infinite in mercy and goodness to his people.—*Things New and Old.*

Verse 9.—While many, alas, are satisfied with mere formalities in religion, or with the dry discussion of doctrines, high or low, as they may be called, see thou and be occupied with Christ himself. It is the knowledge of his person that gives strength and joy to the soul. At all times, under all circumstances, we can say, "*Look upon the face of thine Anointed.*" We cannot always say, *Look on us;* but we may always say, *Look on Him.* In deepest sorrow through conscious failure, or in trials and difficulties through faithfulness to his name, we can ever plead with God what Christ is. God is ever well pleased with him—ever occupied with him as risen from the dead and exalted to his own right hand in heaven; and he would have us also to be occupied with him as the heart's exclusive object. True faith can only rest on *God's estimate* of Christ, not on inward thoughts and feelings. That which may be called the faith of the formalist, rests on the ability of his own mind to judge of these matters. He trusts in himself. This is the essential difference between faith in appearance and faith in reality.—*Things New and Old.*

Verse 9.—"*Look upon the face of thine anointed.*" For I shall never come to look upon thy face, if thou vouchsafe not first to look upon mine: if thou afford me not as well the benefit of thine eyes, to look upon me, as the favour of thine ears, to hear me, I shall be left only to a bare expectation, but never come to the happiness of fruition; but when thou vouchsafest to look upon my face, that look of thine hath an influence of all true blessedness, and makes me find what a happiness it is to have the God of Jacob for my shield.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 10.—"*A day.*" The least good look that a man hath from God, and the least good word that a man hears from God, and the least love letter and love token that a man receives from God is exceedingly precious to that man that hath God for his portion. "*One day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.*" He doth not say, One year in thy courts is better than a thousand

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elsewhere, but *One day* in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere; nor doth he say, One quarter of a year in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere, but "*One day* in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere;" nor doth he say, One month is better than a thousand elsewhere, but "*One day* in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere," to shew that the very least of God is exceeding precious to a gracious soul that hath God for his portion.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 10.—Another sign of God's children is, to delight to be much in God's presence. Children are to be in the presence of their father; where the King is, there is the court; where the presence of God is, there is heaven. God is in a special manner present in his ordinances, they are the Ark of his presence. Now, if we are his children, we love to be much in holy duties. In the use of ordinances we draw near to God, we come into our Father's presence; in prayer we have secret conference with God; the soul while it is praying, is as it were parleying with God. In the word we hear God speaking from heaven to us; and how doth every child of God delight to hear his Father's voice! In the sacrament God kisseth his children with the kisses of his lips; he gives them a smile of his face, and a privy-seal of his love: oh, it is good to draw near to God. It is sweet being in his presence: every true child of God saith, "*A day in thy courts is better than a thousand!*"—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 10.—"*I had rather be a doorkeeper,*" etc. Some read it, "I would rather be fixed to a post in the house of my God, than live at liberty in the tents of the wicked;" alluding to the law concerning servants, who if they would not go out free, were to have their ear bored to the door-post, Exod. xxi. 5, 6. David loved his Master, and loved his work so well, that he desired to be tied to this service for ever, to be more free to it, but never to go out free from it, preferring bonds to duty far before the greatest liberty to sin. Such a superlative delight have holy hearts in holy duties; no satisfaction in their account comparable to that in communion with God.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 10.—"*I had rather be a doorkeeper.*" In the sense that Christ is a Door, David may well be content to be a Door-Keeper, and though in God's house there be many mansions, yet seeing all of them are glorious, even the door-keeper's place is not without its glory. But if you think the office to be mean, consider then whose officer he is, for even a door-keeper is an officer in God's house, and God never displaceth his officers unless it be to advance them to a higher; whereas, in the courts of princes, the greatest officers are oftentimes displaced, turned off often with disgrace.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 10.—"*I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,*" etc. Happy are those persons, whom God will use as besoms to sweep out the dust from his temple; or who shall tug at an oar in the boat where Christ and his church are embarked.—*William Secker, in "The Nonsuch Professor."*

Verse 10.—"*Doorkeeper.*" This is a Korhite psalm, and the descendants of Korah were, in fact, porters, and "keepers of the gates of the tabernacle, and keepers of the entry," as well as being permitted to swell the chorus of the inspired singers of Israel.—*Bossuet, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 10.—Instead of, "*I had rather be a doorkeeper,*" the margin has, according to the Hebrew, "I would choose rather to sit at the threshold." Ainsworth's translation is: "I have chosen to sit at the threshold, in the house of my God;" and Dr. Boothroyd's is: "Abide, or sit, at the threshold." See 2 Kings xii. 9; xxii. 4; xxv. 18; 1 Chron. ix. 19; 2 Chron. xxiii. 4; Esther ii. 21; vi. 2. In all these passages the marginal reading is *threshold.* I think the word "*door-keeper*" does not convey the proper meaning of the words, "to sit at the threshold;" because the preference of the Psalmist was evidently given to a very *humble* position; whereas that of a door-keeper, in Eastern estimation, is truly respectable and confidential.

The marginal reading, however, "to sit at the threshold," at once strikes on an Eastern mind as a situation of deep humility.

See the poor heathen devotee; he goes and sits near the threshold of his

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temple. Look at the beggar; he sits, or prostrates himself, at the threshold of the door or gate, till he shall have gained his suit. —*Joseph Roberts.*

Verse 10.—"*House.*" "*Tents.*" Observe the force of the contrasted expressions. The "*house*" is the Lord's; the "*tents*" are of the wicked. The pleasures of sin are for a season only; the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof.—*Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 10.—"*The tents.*" It is not any tents, or tents of any ordinary kind, that are understood, but rich, powerful, glorious, and splendid tents.—*Venema.*

Verse 11.—"*The Lord God is a sun,*" conveys a striking and impressive truth, when we think of the sun only in his obvious character as a source of light and heat. But what new energy is given to this magnificent emblem, when we learn from astronomy that he is a grand centre of attraction, and when we, in addition, take in that sublime generalization that the sun is the ultimate source of every form of power existing in the world! The wind wafts the commerce of every nation over the mighty deep; but the heat of the sun has rarefied that air, and set that wind in motion. The descending stream yields a power which grinds your grain, turns your spindles, works your looms, drives your forges; but it is because the sun gathered up the vapour from the ocean, which fell upon the hills, and is finding its way back to the source whence it came. The expansive energy of steam propels your engine; but the force with which it operates is locked up in the coal (the remains of extinct forests stored among your hills), or is derived from the wood that abounds in your forests, which now crown and beautify their summits. Both those primeval and these existing forests drew their subsistence from the sun: it is the chemical force resident in his rays which disengaged their carbon from the atmosphere, and laid it up as a source of power for future use. The animal exerts a force by muscular contraction; he draws it from the vegetable on which he feeds; the vegetable derives it from the sun, whose rays determine its growth. Every time you lift your arm, every time you take a step, you are drawing on the power the sun has given you. When you step into the railway carriage, it is the sun-power that hurries you along. When gentle breezes fan your languid cheek, and when the resistless tornado levels cities in its fury, they are the servants of the sun. What an emblem of Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being!—*Professor Green.*

Verse 11.—The "*sun,*" which among all inanimate creatures is the most excellent, notes all manner of excellency, provision, and prosperity; and the "*shield,*" which among all artificial creatures is the chiefest, notes all manner of protection whatsoever. Under the name of "*grace,*" all spiritual good is wrapped up; and under the name of "*glory,*" all eternal good is wrapped up; and under the last clause, "*No good thing will he withhold,*" is wrapped up all temporal good: all put together speaks out God to be an all-sufficient portion. —*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 11.—"*The Lord God is a shield.*" He is a shield to our *persons:* "Touch not," said he, "mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." "The Lord," said Moses in his name, "the Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in. He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" said God to Satan:—"Yes," replied Satan, "I have; thou hast set a hedge about him." Yes, brethren: "*the Lord God is a shield.*" He is a shield to our *graces.* The dislike and malice of Satan is principally levelled at us when we become subjects of divine influence. "Simon, Simon," said our Saviour, "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat, but," he adds, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." There was a shield to the good man's faith, or he and it too had been gone. You may remember the name of Little Faith in Bunyan's Pilgrim. It appears that Hopeful was greatly surprised that the robbers had not taken his jewels from him; but he was given to understand that *they* were not in his own keeping.

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Yes, Christian, HE shall be thy "*shield*" to cover thy hope when it appears to thee to be giving up the ghost. . . . . Yes, and He will be a shield *to thy property*. "Hast thou not set a hedge about *all* that he hath?" Though Job was tried a little while, his property was only put out to interest; by and by it came back cent. per cent.; and he gained, besides, a vast increase of knowledge and of grace.—*Matthew Wilks.* 1746—1829.

Verse 11.—Turn your thoughts to the combination; "*the Lord God is a sun and shield.*" As a sun he shows me more and more of my sinfulness; but then as a shield, he gives me power to oppose it and assurance that I shall conquer. As a sun, he discloses so much of the enormity of guilt, that I am forced to exclaim, "Mine iniquities are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear;" but then as a shield, he shows me that he has laid the load on a Surety, who bore it into a land of forgetfulness. As a sun, he makes me daily more and more sensible of the utter impossibility of my working out a righteousness of my own; but then, as a shield, he fastens constantly my thoughts on that righteousness of his Son, which is meritoriously conveyed to all who believe on his name. As a sun, in short, he brings facts to my knowledge, (inasmuch as he brings myself and mine enemies to my knowledge,) which would make the matter of deliverance seem out of reach and hopeless, if he were not at the same time a shield; but seeing that he is both a shield as well as a sun, the disclosures which he makes as a sun only prepare me for the blessings which he imparts as a shield. Who then shall wonder, that after announcing the character of God, the psalmist should break into expressions of confidence and assurance? It may be, that as the corruption of nature is brought continually before me, deeper and wider and darker, Satan will ply me with the suggestion; "The guiltiness is too inveterate to be eradicated, and too enormous to be pardoned;" and if God were a sun, and nothing more, it might be hard to put away the suggestion as a device of the father of lies. I might then fear. I might fear God's holiness, thinking I should never be fitted for communion with Deity; I might fear God's justice, thinking I should never find acquittal at the last dread assize. But can I fear either, when besides a sun, God is also a shield? Can I fear God's justice, when as a shield he places sufferings to my account, which satisfy the law, even to the last penalty? Can I fear his holiness, when he gives me interest in an obedience which fulfils every precept? Does not the one character, that of a shield, help me to scatter those solicitudes, which may well be excited through the operation of the other character, that of a sun? And am I not warranted—nay, am I not living far below my privilege—if I fail in deriving from the combination of character a boldness and a confidence, not to be overborne by those suspicions, which have Satan for their author? As a sun, God shows we myself; as a shield, God shows me himself. The sun discloses mine own nothingness; the shield, Divine sufficiency. The one enables me to discern that I deserve nothing but wrath, and can earn nothing but shame; the other, that I have a title to immortality, and may lay claim to an enduring inheritance in heaven. I learn, in short, from God as "*a Sun*," that if I have "wages," I must have eternal death; but from God as "*a Shield*," that if I will receive the "free gift" I may have "eternal life." Whom then shall I fear? Myself—confessedly my worst enemy? "The Sun" makes a man start from himself; the "Shield" assures him that he shall be protected against himself and builded up "for a habitation of God through the Spirit." Shall I shrink from Satan and the hosts of principalities and powers? The "Sun" shows them awful in their might and vehement in their malice; but the "Shield" exhibits them spoiled and led captive, when Christ died and rose again. Shall I dread death? Indeed the "Sun" makes death terrible, forcing me to read God's curse in the motionless limbs and mouldering features; but then the "Shield" displays the open sepulchre, the quickened dust, the marvels of a resurrection, the mountain and the ocean and the valley yielding up the sleeping generations. Is death to be dreaded? Take the catalogue of things, which, inasmuch as we

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are fallen creatures, God, as our "Sun," instructs us to fear; and we shall find, that insomuch as we are redeemed creatures, God as our "Shield" enables us to triumph over all our fears. Who therefore shall hesitate to agree, that there results from this combination of character exactly that system of counterpoise, which we affirm to be discoverable in grace as well as in providence? Who can fail, if indeed he have been disciplined by that twofold tuition, which informs man first that he has destroyed himself and then that God hath "laid help on One that is mighty," the former lesson humiliating, the latter encouraging, the one making way for the other, so that the scholar is emptied of every false confidence that he may be fitted to entertain the true—oh! who, we say, can fail to gather from the combination of Divine character the inference drawn by the Psalmist? to exclaim (that is), after recording that "the Lord God is a Sun and Shield"—"He will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly?"—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 11.—The words of the text are as a voice from heaven, inviting me up thither, and answering all the doubts and fears of such as believe and follow the joyful sound. Am I in *darkness*, and fear I shall never find the way? Open thine eye, O my soul! look up to the Father of lights: *the Lord is a sun*, whose steady beams shall direct thy steps. Is there an inward veil to be removed from my mind, as well as obscurity from my path? He is sufficient for both. God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, can shine into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory, and lead on to it. (2 Cor. iv. 6.) He can make the day dawn, and the day star to arise in our hearts; (2 Peter i. 19), and by *both*, guide our feet into the way of peace. (Luke i. 79.) Doth the same light that discovers my way, discover what opposition I am like to meet with? what enemies and dangers I am to go through? Hear, O my soul, *the Lord is a shield.* Light and strength are conjoined; none can miscarry under his conduct, nor have any reason to be discouraged. With this he comforteth Abraham. Gen. xv. 1, "*Fear not: I am thy shield.*" Do I groan under a sense of my unmeetness for the heavenly kingdom? Let this support my soul, "*the Lord will give grace.*" Am I altogether unworthy of so high a happiness? It springs from his own most free, unbounded love; "*the Lord will give glory.*" Am I urged with a thousand wants that need supply, what more can be added? "*No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.* Nothing that is evil can be desired; and nothing that is good shall be denied. Here, O my soul, is a fountain opened; here thy eager thirst may be fully satisfied; thy largest desires filled up; and thy mind be ever at rest.—*Daniel Wilcox.*

Verse 11.—Why need a saint fear darkness, when he has such a sun to guide him? Or dread dangers, when he has such a shield to guard him?—*William Secker.*

Verse 11.—"*The Lord will give glory.*" "Man," says a wise author, "is the glory of this lower world; the soul is the glory of man; grace is the glory of the soul; and heaven is the glory of grace." Heaven, or glory, is grace matured and brought to infinite perfection; there we shall see his face, and have his name written in our foreheads; and we shall reign with him for ever and ever.—*Matthew Wilks.*

Verse 11.—"*No good thing will he withhold,*" etc. But how is this true, when God oftentimes withholds riches and honours, and health of body from men, though they walk never so uprightly; we may therefore know that honours and riches and bodily strength, are none of God's good things; they are of the number of things indifferent which God bestows promiscuously upon the just and unjust, as the rain to fall and the sun to shine. The good things of God are chiefly peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost in this life; fruition of God's presence, and vision of his blessed face in the next, and these good things God never bestows upon the wicked, never withholds from the godly, and they are all cast up in one sum where it is said, Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt: "Blessed are the pure of heart (and such are only they that

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walk uprightly) for they shall see God." But is walking uprightly such a matter with God, that it should be so rewarded? Is it not more pleasing to God to see us go stooping than walking upright, seeing stooping is the gait of humility, than which there is nothing to God more pleasing? It is no doubt a hard matter to stoop and go upright both at once, yet both must be done, and both indeed are done, are done at once by every one that is godly; but when I say they are done both at once, I mean not of the body, I know two such postures in the body both at once are impossible; but the soul can do it, the soul can stoop and go upright both at once; for then doth the soul walk upright before God, when it stoops in humility before God and men.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 11.—This is an immense fountain; the Lord fill all the buckets of our hearts at the spring, and give us capacious souls, as he hath a liberal hand.—*Thomas Adams.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—I. Why called Tabernacles? To include (1) the holiest of all; (2) The holy place; (3) The court and precincts of the Tabernacle. "*Amiable*" is predicated of these. The courts amiable—the holy place more amiable—the holiest of all most amiable. II. Why called the Tabernacles of the Lord of hosts? To denote (1) Its connection with the boundless universe; (2) Its distinction from it. Present everywhere where God is peculiarly present here. III. Why called *amiable?* (1) Because of the character in which God dwells here. Is condescension amiable? Is love? Is mercy? Is grace? These are displayed here (2) Because of the purpose for which he resides here. To save sinners: to comfort saints.

Verse 2.—I. The object of Desire: (1) The house of the Lord; (2) The Lord of the house; the life of God in us and our life in him. II. The Occasion of the Desire. Exclusion from the Sanctuary. David says not, Oh how I long for my palace, my crown, my sceptre, my kingdom; but, Oh how I long to return to the house of God! III. The Strength of the Desire. (1) It was an inward longing, "my soul longeth," etc.; (2) A painful longing, "yea, fainteth;" (3) A prayerful longing, "my heart crieth out;" (4) An entire longing, "my heart and my flesh," etc.; Or, I. The value of God's house is known by attending it. II. It is better known by being afterwards banished from it. III. It is best known by being restored to it.

Verses 1, 2, 3.—The Titles for God in these three verses are worth dwelling upon. "Jehovah of Hosts;" "the living God;" "my King and my God."

Verse 3.—I. The Eloquence of Grief. David in his banishment envies the sparrows and the swallows that had built their nests by the house of God, more than Absalom who had usurped his palace and his throne. II. The Ingenuity of Prayer. Why should sparrows and swallows be nearer to thy altars than I am, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God! "Fear not, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

Verse 4.—I. The Privilege suggested—dwelling in the house of God. Some birds fly over the house of God—some occasionally alight upon it—others build their nests and train up their young there. This was the privilege which the Psalmist desired. II. The Fact asserted. "Blessed are they that dwell," etc., who make it the spiritual home of themselves and their children. III. The Reason given. "They will be still," etc. (1) They will have much for which to praise God; (2) They will see much to praise in God.

Verse 5.—Man is blessed, I. When his strength is in God. Strength to believe, strength to obey, strength to suffer. II. When God's ways are in

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him. "In whose heart," etc. When the doctrines, precepts, and promises of God are deeply engraved upon the heart.

Verse 7.—I. Trusting God in trouble brings present comfort—"Who passing," etc. II. Present comfort ensures still larger supplies—"The rain also," etc.

Verse 8.—There is, I. Progression. "They go;" (1) The people of God cannot remain stationary; (2) They must not recede; (3) They should always be advancing. II. Invigoration. "From strength to strength." (1) From one ordinance to another; (2) from one duty to another; (3) from one grace to another; (4) from one degree of grace to another. Add faith to faith, virtue to virtue, knowledge to knowledge, etc. III. Completion. "Every one of them," etc.

Verse 8.—I. Prayer is not confined to the Sanctuary. David, in his banishment, says, "Hear my prayer." II. Help is not confined to the Sanctuary. The Lord of hosts is "here," as well as in his tabernacles. See verse 1. III. Grace is not confined to the Sanctuary. Here, too, in the wilderness is the covenanting God, the God of Jacob.

Verse 9.—Observe, I. The Faith. Our shield is thine anointed—Thine Anointed is our Shield. This is not David, because he says *our* Shield, but David's greater Son. A gleam of Gospel light through the thick clouds. II. The Prayer. "Behold, O God," etc. "Look," etc. Look upon him as our Representative, and look upon us in him. III. The Plea. (1) He has engaged to be our defence from thine anger; (2) he has been anointed to this office by thee.

Verse 10.—Here is, I. A comparison of Places. "A day in thy courts," etc. How much more a day in heaven! What, then, must an eternity in heaven be! II. A comparison of Persons. "I would rather be a doorkeeper," etc. Better be the least in the Church than the greatest in the world. If "better reign in hell than serve in heaven" was Satan's first thought after he fell, it was the first thought only.

Verse 11.—I. What God is to his people. "A sun and shield." (1) The source of all good; (2) a defence from all evil. II. What he gives. (1) Grace here; (2) glory hereafter. III. What he withholds. All that is not good. If he withholds health or wealth, or his own smiles from us, it is because they are not good for us at that particular time.

Verse 12.—I. The one thing that makes man blessed. Trust in God. "Blessed," etc. (1) For all things; (2) at all times; (3) in all circumstances. II. The Blessing contained in that one thing. God himself becomes ours; (1) his mercy for our pardon; (2) his power for our protection; (3) his wisdom for our guidance; (4) his faithfulness for our preservation; (5) his all-sufficiency for our supply. III. The certainty of the blessing. (1) From David's own experience; (2) from his solemn appeal to God respecting it. "O Lord God of hosts," etc.

[*All the above are by Rev. George Rogers.*]

Verse 5.—The preciousness of intensity and enthusiasm in religious belief, worship, and life.

Verses 5, 6, 7.—The blessed people are described, 1. By their earnest desire and resolution to take this journey, though they dwelt far off from the tabernacle, ver. 5. 2. By their painful passage, yet some refreshments by the way, ver. 6. 3. By their constant progress, till they came to the place they aimed at, ver. 7.—*T. Manton.*

Verse 6.—As the valley of weeping symbolizes dejection, so a "well" symbolizes ever-flowing salvation and comfort (compare John iv. 14; also Isa. xii. 3).

Verse 6.—I. "*The valley of Baca.*" Of this valley we may observe, 1. It is much frequented. 2. Unpleasant to flesh and blood. 3. Very healthful. 4. Very safe. 5. Very profitable. II. The toilsome effort: "make it a well." 1. Comfort may be obtained in the deepest trouble. 2. Comfort must be obtained by exertion. 3. Comfort obtained by one is of use to others, as a well

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may be. III. The heavenly supply. "The rain also filleth the pools." All is from God; effort is of no avail without him.

Verse 8.—Pleas for answers to prayer in the titles here used. I. He is JEHOVAH, the living, all-wise, all-powerful, faithful, gracious, and immutable God. II. He is God of hosts, having abundant agencies under his control; he can send angels, restrain devils, actuate good men, overrule bad men, and govern all other agents. III. He is the God of Jacob, of chosen Jacob, as seen in Jacob's dream; God of Jacob in his banishment, in his wrestling (and so a God overcome by prayer), God pardoning Jacob's sins, God preserving Jacob and his seed after him.

Verse 9.—I. What God is to us. II. What we would have him look at. III. Where we would be: hidden behind the shield—seen in the person of Christ.

Verse 10.—I. Days in God's courts. Days of hearing, of repenting, of believing, of adoration, of communion, of revival, etc. II. Their preciousness. Better than a thousand days of victory, of pleasure, of money-making, of harvest, of discussion, of travelling amid beauties of nature. III. Reasons for this preciousness. They are more pleasurable, more profitable now, and more preparatory for the future and for heaven. The employment, the society, the enjoyment, the result, etc., are all better.

Verse 12.—The blessedness of the life of faith over that of carnal enjoyment, religious feeling, self-confidence, living upon marks and evidences, trusting in man, etc.

WORKS UPON THE EIGHTY-FOURTH PSALM.

The Faith of the Church Militant, moste effectualie described in this exposition of the 84. Psalme, by that reuerend Pastor, and publike Professor of God's word, in the famous vniuersitie of Haffine in Denmarke, NICHOLAS HEMMINGIVS. *A treatise written as to the instruction of the ignorant in the groundes of religion, so to the confutation of the Jewes, the Turkes, Atheists, Papists, Heretiks, and al other aduersaries of the trueth whatsoeuer. Translated out of Latin into English, &c. by* THOMAS ROGERS. *At London, printed by H. Middleton for Andrew Maunsel.* ANNO. 1581.

David's Heart's Desire; or, An Exposition of Psalm LXXXIV.; in Excellent Encouragements against Afflictions. . . . . By Thomas Pierson, M.A. [Reprinted in Nichol's Series of Puritan Commentaries.]

An Exposition upon some select Psalms of David . . . . By ROBERT ROLLOCK. 1600. 16mo.

Meditations and Disqvisitions upon seven Consolatorie Psalmes of David. . . . . By Sir RICHARD BAKER, *Knight.* 1640. [pp. 119—142.]

Meditations on the Eighty-fourth Psalm, in "Things New and Old. A Monthly Magazine." Vol. IX. 1866.

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PSALM LXXXV.

TITLE.—To the Chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah. *There is no need to repeat our observations upon a title which is of so frequent occurrence; the reader is referred to notes placed in the headings of preceding psalms. Yet it may not be out of place to quote the forty-sixth verse of Nehemiah XII.—"In the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God."*

SUBJECT AND OCCASION.—*It is the prayer of a patriot for his afflicted country, in which he pleads the Lord's former mercies, and by faith foresees brighter days. We believe that David wrote it, but many question that assertion. Certain interpreters appear to grudge the psalmist David the authorship of any of the psalms, and refer the sacred songs by wholesale to the times of Hezekiah, Josiah, the Captivity, and the Maccabees. It is remarkable that, as a rule, the more sceptical a writer is, the more resolute is he to have done with David; while the purely evangelic annotators are for the most part content to leave the royal poet in the chair of authorship. The charms of a new theory also operate greatly upon writers who would have nothing at all to say if they did not invent a novel hypothesis, and twist the language of the psalm in order to justify it. The present psalm has of course been referred to the Captivity, the critics could not resist the temptation to do that, though, for our part we see no need to do so: it is true a captivity is mentioned in the first verse, but that does not necessitate the nation's having been carried away into exile, since Job's captivity was turned, and yet he had never left his native land: moreover, the text speaks of the captivity of Jacob as brought back, but had it referred to the Babylonian emigration, it would have spoken of Judah; for Jacob or Israel, as such, did not return. The first verse in speaking of "the land" proves that the author was not an exile. Our own belief is that David penned this national hymn when the land was oppressed by the Philistines, and in the spirit of prophecy he foretold the peaceful years of his own reign and the repose of the rule of Solomon, the psalm having all along an inner sense of which Jesus and his salvation are the key. The presence of Jesus the Saviour reconciles earth and heaven, and secures to us the golden age, the balmy days of universal peace.*

DIVISIONS.—*In the first four verses the poet sings of the Lord's former mercies and begs him to remember his people; from 5 to 7 he pleads the cause of afflicted Israel; and then, having listened to the sacred oracle in verse 8, he publishes joyfully the tidings of future good, 9—13.*

EXPOSITION.

LORD, thou has been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.

3 Thou hast taken away all my wrath: thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger.

4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

1. "LORD, *thou hast been favourable unto thy land.*" The self-existent, all-sufficient JEHOVAH is addressed: by that name he revealed himself to Moses when his people were in bondage, by that name he is here pleaded with. It is wise to dwell upon that view of the divine character which arouses the sweetest memories of his love. Sweeter still is that dear name of "Our Father," with which Christians have learned to commence their prayers. The psalmist speaks

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of Canaan as the Lord's land, for he chose it for his people, conveyed to it them by covenant, conquered it by his power, and dwelt in it in mercy; it was meet therefore that he should smile upon a land so peculiarly his own. It is most wise to plead the Lord's union of interest with ourselves, to lash our little boat as it were close to his great barque, and experience a sacred community in the tossings of the storm. It is *our* land that is devastated, but O Jehovah, it is also *thy* land. The psalmist dwells upon the Lord's favour to the chosen land, which he had shewed in a thousand ways. God's past doings are prophetic of what he will do; hence the encouraging argument—"Thou hast been favourable unto thy land," therefore deal graciously with it again. Many a time had foes been baffled, pestilence stayed, famine averted, and deliverance vouchsafed, because of the Lord's favour; that same favourable regard is therefore again invoked. With an immutable God this is powerful reasoning; it is because he changes not that we are not consumed, ard know we never shall be if he has once been favourable to us. From this example of prayer let us learn how to order our cause before God.

It is clear that Israel was not in exile, or the prayer before us would not have referred to *the land* but to the nation.

"*Thou hast hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.*" When down-trodden and oppressed through their sins, the Ever-merciful One had looked upon them, changed their sad condition, chased away the invaders, and given to his people rest: this he had done not once, nor twice, but times without number. Many a time have we also been brought into soul-captivity by our backslidings, but we have not been left therein; the God who brought Jacob back from Padan-aram to his father's house, has restored us to the enjoyment of holy fellowship;—will he not do the like again? Let us appeal to him with Jacob-like wrestlings, beseeching him to be favourable, or sovereignly gracious to us notwithstanding all our provocations of his love. Let declining churches remember their former history, and with holy confidence plead with the Lord to turn their captivity yet again.

2. "*Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people.*" Often and often had he done this, pausing to pardon even when his sword was bared to punish. Who is a pardoning God like thee, O Jehovah? Who is so slow to anger, so ready to forgive? Every believer in Jesus enjoys the blessing of pardoned sin, and he should regard this priceless boon as the pledge of all other needed mercies. He should plead it with God—"Lord, hast thou pardoned me, and wilt thou let me perish for lack of grace, or fall into thine enemies' hands for want of help. Thou wilt not thus leave thy work unfinished." "*Thou hast covered all their sin.*" All of it, every spot, and wrinkle, the veil of love has covered all. Sin has been divinely put out of sight. Hiding it beneath the propitiatory, covering it with the sea of the atonement, blotting it out, making it to cease to be, the Lord has put it so completely away that even his omniscient eye sees it no more. What a miracle is this! To cover up the sun would be easy work compared with the covering up of sin. Not without a covering atonement is sin removed, but by means of the great sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, it is most effectually put away by one act, for ever. What a covering does his blood afford!

3. "*Thou hast taken away all thy wrath.*" Having removed the sin, the anger is removed also. How often did the longsuffering of God take away from Israel the punishments which had been justly laid upon them! How often also has the Lord's chastising hand been removed from us when our waywardness called for heavier strokes! "*Thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.*" Even when judgments had been most severe, the Lord had in mercy stayed his hand. In mid volley he had restrained his thunder. When ready to destroy, he had averted his face from his purpose of judgment and allowed mercy to interpose. The book of Judges is full of illustrations of this, and the psalmist does well to quote them while he intercedes. Is not our experience equally studded with instances in which judgment has been stayed and tenderness has ruled? What a difference between the fierce anger which

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is feared and deprecated here, and the speaking of peace which is foretold in verse 8. There are many changes in Christian experience, and therefore we must not despair when we are undergoing the drearier portion of the spiritual life, for soon, very soon, it may be transformed into gladness.

"The Lord can clear the darkest skies,
Can give us day for night,
Make drops of sacred sorrow rise
To rivers of delight."

4. "*Turn us, O God of our salvation.*" This was the main business. Could the erring tribes be rendered penitent all would be well. It is not that God needs turning from his anger so much as that we need turning from our sin; here is the hinge of the whole matter. Our trials frequently arise out of our sins, they will not go till the sins go. We need to be turned from our sins, but only God can turn us: God the Saviour must put his hand to the work: it is indeed a main part of our salvation. Conversion is the dawn of salvation. To turn a heart to God is as difficult as to make the world revolve upon its axis. Yet when a man learns to pray for conversion there is hope for him, he who turns to prayer is beginning to turn from sin. It is a very blessed sight to see a whole people turn unto their God; may the Lord so send forth his converting grace on our land that we may live to see the people flocking to the loving worship of God as the doves to their cotes. "*And cause thine anger toward us to cease.*" Make an end of it. Let it no longer burn. When sinners cease to rebel, the Lord ceases to be angry with them; when they return to him he returns to them: yea, he is first in the reconciliation, and turns them when otherwise they would never turn of themselves. May all those who are now enduring the hidings of Jehovah's face seek with deep earnestness to be turned anew unto the Lord, for so shall all their despondencies come to an end.

Thus the sweet singer asks for his nation priceless blessings, and quotes the best of arguments. Because the God of Israel has been so rich in favour in bygone years, therefore he is entreated to reform and restore his backsliding nation.

5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?
6 Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?
7 Shew us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation.

5 "*Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?*" See how the psalmist makes bold to plead. We are in time as yet and not in eternity, and does not time come to an end, and therefore thy wrath! Wilt thou be angry always as if it were eternity? Is there no boundary to thine indignation? Will thy wrath never have done? And if for ever angry, yet wilt thou be angry "*with us,*" thy favoured people, the seed of Abraham, thy friend? That our enemies should be always wroth is natural, but wilt *thou*, our God, be always incensed against us? Every word is an argument Men in distress never waste words. "*Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?*" Shall sons suffer for their fathers' faults, and punishment become an entailed inheritance? O merciful God, hast thou a mind to spin out thine anger, and make it as long as the ages? Cease thou, as thou hast ceased aforetime, and let grace reign as it has done in days of yore. When we are under spiritual desertion we may beg in the like manner that the days of tribulation may be shortened, lest our spirit should utterly fail beneath the trial.

6. "*Wilt thou not revive us again?*" Hope here grows almost confident. She feels sure that the Lord will return in all his power to save. We are dead or dying, faint and feeble, God alone can revive us, he has in other times refreshed his people, he is still the same, he will repeat his love. Will he not?

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Why should he not? We appeal to him—"Wilt thou not?" "*That thy people may rejoice in thee.*" Thou lovest to see thy children happy with that best of happiness which centres in thyself, therefore revive us, for revival will bring us the utmost joy. The words before us teach us that gratitude has an eye to the giver, even beyond the gift—"thy people may rejoice *in thee.*" Those who were revived would rejoice not only in the new life but in the Lord who was the author of it. Joy in the Lord is the ripest fruit of grace, all revivals and renewals lead up to it. By our possession of it we may estimate our spiritual condition, it is a sure gauge of inward prosperity. A genuine revival without joy in the Lord is as impossible as spring without flowers, or daydawn without light. If, either in our own souls or in the hearts of others, we see declension, it becomes us to be much in the use of this prayer, and if on the other hand we are enjoying visitations of the Spirit and bedewings of grace, let us abound in holy joy and make it our constant delight to joy in God.

7. "*Shew us thy mercy, O* LORD." Reveal it to our poor half-blinded eyes. We cannot see it or believe it by reason of our long woes, but thou canst make it plain to us. Others have beheld it, Lord shew it to us. We have seen thine anger, Lord let us see thy mercy. Thy prophets have told us of it, but O Lord, do thou thyself display it in this our hour of need. "*And grant us thy salvation.*" This includes deliverance from the sin as well as the chastisement, it reaches from the depth of their misery to the height of divine love. God's salvation is perfect in kind, comprehensive in extent, and eminent in degree; grant us this, O Lord, and we have all.

8 I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.

9 Surely his salvation *is* nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.

10 Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed *each other.*

11 Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

12 Yea, the LORD shall give *that which is* good; and our land shall yield her increase.

13 Righteousness shall go before him; and he shall set *us* in the way of his steps.

Having offered earnest intercession for the afflicted but penitent nation, the sacred poet in the true spirit of faith awaits a response from the sacred oracle. He pauses in joyful confidence, and then in ecstatic triumph he gives utterance to his hopes in the richest form of song.

8. "*I will hear what God the* LORD *will speak.*" When we believe that God hears us, it is but natural that we should be eager to hear him. Only from him can come the word which can speak peace to troubled spirits; the voices of men are feeble in such a case, a plaister far too narrow for the sore; but God's voice is power, he speaks and it is done, and hence when we hear him our distress is ended. Happy is the suppliant who has grace to lie patiently at the Lord's door, and wait until his love shall act according to its old wont and chase all sorrow far away. "*For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints.*" Even though for a while his voice is stern with merited rebuke, he will not always chide, the Great Father will reassume his natural tone of gentleness and pity. The speaking of peace is the peculiar prerogative of the Lord Jehovah, and deep, lasting, ay, eternal, is the peace he thus creates. Yet not to all does the divine word bring peace, but only to his own people, whom he means to make saints, and those whom he has already made so. "*But let them*

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not turn again to folly." For if they do so, his rod will fall upon them again, and their peace will be invaded. Those who would enjoy communion with God must be jealous of themselves, and avoid all that would grieve the Holy Spirit; not only the grosser sins, but even the follies of life must be guarded against by those who are favoured with the delights of conscious fellowship. We serve a jealous God, and must needs therefore be incessantly vigilant against evil. Backsliders should study this verse with the utmost care, it will console them and yet warn them, draw them back to their allegiance, and at the same time inspire them with a wholesome fear of going further astray. To turn again to folly is worse than being foolish for once; it argues wilfulness and obstinacy, and it involves the soul in sevenfold sin. There is no fool like the man who will be a fool cost him what it may.

9. "*Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him.*" Faith knows that a saving God is always near at hand, but *only* (for such is the true rendering) to those who fear the Lord, and worship him with holy awe. In the gospel dispensation this truth is conspicuously illustrated. If to seeking sinners salvation is nigh, it is assuredly very nigh to those who have once enjoyed it, and have lost its present enjoyment by their folly; they have but to turn unto the Lord and they shall enjoy it again. We have not to go about by a long round of personal mortifications or spiritual preparations, we may come to the Lord, through Jesus Christ, just as we did at the first, and he will again receive us into his loving embrace. Whether it be a nation under adversity, or a single individual under chastisement, the sweet truth before us is rich with encouragement to repentance, and renewed holiness.

"*That glory may dwell in our land.*" The object of the return of grace will be a permanent establishment of a better state of things, so that gloriously devout worship shall be rendered to God continuously, and a glorious measure of prosperity shall be enjoyed in consequence. Israel was glorious whenever she was faithful—her dishonor always followed her disloyalty; believers also live glorious lives when they walk obediently, and they only lose the true glory of their religion when they fall from their stedfastness.

In these two verses we have, beneath the veil of the letter, an intimation of the coming of THE WORD OF GOD to the nations in times of deep apostacy and trouble, when faithful hearts would be looking and longing for the promise which had so long tarried. By his coming salvation is brought near, and glory, even the glory of the presence of the Lord, tabernacles among men. Of this the succeeding verses speak without obscurity.

10. "*Mercy and truth are met together.*" In answer to prayer, the exulting psalmist sees the attributes of God confederating to bless the once afflicted nation. Mercy comes hand-in-hand with Truth to fulfil the faithful promise of their gracious God; the people recognise at once the grace and the veracity of Jehovah, he is to them neither a tyrant nor a deceiver. "*Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*" The Lord whose just severity inflicted the smart, now in pity sends peace to bind up the wound. The people being now made willing to forsake their sins, and to follow after righteousness, find peace granted to them at once. "The war-drum throbbed no longer, and the battle-flags were furled;" for idolatry was forsaken, and Jehovah was adored.

This appears to be the immediate and primary meaning of these verses; but the inner sense is Christ Jesus, the reconciling Word. In him, the attributes of God unite in glad unanimity in the salvation of guilty men, they meet and embrace in such a manner as else were inconceivable either to our just fears or to our enlightened hopes. God is as true as if he had fulfilled every letter of his threatenings, as righteous as if he had never spoken peace to a sinner's conscience; his love in undiminished splendour shines forth, but no other of his ever-blessed characteristics is eclipsed thereby. It is the custom of modern *thinkers* (?) to make sport of this representation of the result of our Lord's substitutionary atonement; but had they ever been themselves made to feel the weight of sin upon a spiritually awakened conscience, they would cease from

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their vain ridicule. Their doctrine of atonement has well been described by Dr. Duncan as the admission "that the Lord Jesus Christ did something or other, which somehow or other, was in some way or other connected with man's salvation." This is their substitute for substitution. Our facts are infinitely superior to their dreams, and yet they sneer. It is but natural that natural men should do so. We cannot expect animals to set much store by the discoveries of science, neither can we hope to see unspiritual men rightly estimate the solution of spiritual problems—they are far above and out of their sight. Meanwhile it remains for those who rejoice in the great reconciliation to continue both to wonder and adore.

11. "*Truth shall spring out of the earth.*" Promises which lie unfulfilled, like buried seeds, shall spring up and yield harvests of joy; and men renewed by grace shall learn to be true to one another and their God, and abhor the falsehood which they loved before. "*And righteousness shall look down from heaven,*" as if it threw up the windows and leaned out to gaze upon a penitent people, whom it could not have looked upon before without an indignation which would have been fatal to them. This is a delicious scene. Earth yielding flowers of truth, and heaven shining with stars of holiness; the spheres echoing to each other, or being mirrors of each other's beauties. "Earth carpeted with truth and canopied with righteousness," shall be a nether heaven. When God looks down in grace, man sends his heart upward in obedience.

The person of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ explains this verse most sweetly. In Him truth is found in our humanity, and his deity brings divine righteousness among us. His Spirit's work even now creates a hallowed harmony between his church below, and the sovereign righteousness above; and in the latter day, earth shall be universally adorned with every precious virtue, and heaven shall hold intimate intercourse with it. There is a world of meaning in these verses, only needing meditation to draw it out. Reader, "the well is deep," but if thou hast the Spirit, it cannot be said, that "thou hast nothing to draw with."

12. "*Yea, the* LORD *shall give that which is good.*" Being himself pure goodness, he will readily return from his wrath, and deal out good things to his repenting people. Our evil brings evil upon us, but when we are brought back to follow that which is good, the Lord abundantly enriches us with good things. Material good will always be bestowed where it can be enjoyed in consistency with spiritual good. "*And our land shall yield her increase.*" The curse of barrenness will fly with the curse of sin. When the people yielded what was due to God, the soil would recompense their husbandry. See at this day what sin has done for Palestine, making her gardens a wilderness; her wastes are the scars of her iniquities: nothing but repentance and divine forgiveness will reclaim her desolations. The whole world also shall be bright with the same blessing in the days yet to come,—

> "Freed from the curse, the grateful garden gives
> Its fruits in goodly revenue. Nor frost,
> Nor blight, nor mildew fall, nor cankerworm,
> Nor caterpillar, mar one ripening hope.
> The clouds drop fatness. The very elements
> Are subject to the prayerful will of those
> Whose pleasure is in unison with God's."

13. "*Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.*" God's march of right will leave a track wherein his people will joyfully follow. He who smote in justice will also bless in justice, and in both will make his righteousness manifest, so as to affect the hearts and lives of all his people. Such are the blessings of our Lord's first advent, and such shall be yet more conspicuously the result of his second coming. Even so, come Lord Jesus. Amen.

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EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This beautiful psalm, like some others, has come down to us without name or date; the production of some unknown poetic genius, touched, purified, and exalted by the fire of celestial inspiration; a precious relic of that golden age, when the Hebrew music was instinct with a spirit such as never breathed on Greece or Rome. It is interesting to reflect on the anonymous origin of some of the psalms; to remember how largely the church of God is indebted to some nameless worthies who wrote for us hymns and spiritual songs, full of richer strains than were ever poured forth by the most illustrious of pagan name. These holy men are passed away, they have left no record of their history; but they have bequeathed legacies of rich, varied, and inspired sentiments, which will render the church debtors to them to the end of time.—*John Stoughton.* 1852.

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm may be thus divided: verses 1, 2, 3, express the thanks of the people for their return from captivity; verses 4, 5, 6, their prayer for their own *reformation;* in verse 7, they pray for the coming of the *Messiah;* verse 8 contains the *words* of the *High-priest*, with *God's Gracious answer;* which answer is followed by the grateful acclamations *of the people*, to the end of the Psalm.

To prepare for this interpretation, let us observe, how very strangely the words are expressed at present—"*I will hear what God the Lord will say:* FOR *he shall speak peace unto his people.*" But surely, God could not be consulted, *because* it was unnecessary; nor could the High-priest possibly say, that he would ask of God, *because* he knew what God would answer; especially, as we have now *a question to God* proposed, and yet no *answer from God* given at all. Under these difficulties we are happily relieved; since it appears, on satisfactory authorities, that, instead of the particle rendered "*for*," the word here originally signified *in* or *by me*, which slight variation removes the obscurity, and restores that very light which has long been wanted.

The *people* having prayed for the speedy arrival of their great *salvation;* the *High-priest* says, (as it should be here expressed), "*I will hear what the Almighty sayeth.—Jehovah,* BY ME sayeth, PEACE *unto his people, even unto his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.*" Whereupon, as the Jews understood *peace* to comprehend *every* blessing, and of course *their greatest* blessing, they at once acknowledged the *certainty* of this salvation, the *glory* of their land—they proclaim it as *nigh* at hand—and then, in rapture truly prophetical, they see this glory as actually arrived, as already *dwelling* in Judea—they behold God in fulfilling most strictly what he had promised most graciously—they see therefore the *mercy* of God, and the *truth* of God met together—they see that scheme perfected, in which the *righteousness* (*i.e.* the justice) of God harmonizes with the *peace* (*i.e.* the happiness) of man; so that righteousness and peace *salute* each other with the tenderest affection. In short, they see TRUTH *flourishing out of the earth; i.e.* they see *him*, who is *the way, the truth*, and *the life*, born here *on earth;* and they even see the *righteousness*, or justice of God, looking down from *heaven*, as being well pleased.

Verse the 12th is at present translated so unhappily, that it is quite despoiled of all its genuine glory. For, could the prophet, after all the rapturous things said before, coldly say here, that God *would give what was good*—and that *Judea* should have *a plentiful harvest?* No: consistency and good sense forbid it; and truth confirms their protest against it. The words here express the reasons of all the preceding energies, and properly signify—*Yea, Jehovah granteth* THE BLESSING; *and our land granteth* HER OFFSPRING. And what can be *the blessing*—what, amidst these sublime images, can be *Judea's offspring*—but HE, and HE only, who was *the blessing of all lands* in general, and *the glory of Judea* in particular? And what says the verse following? "*Righteousness goeth*

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before HIM—certainly, not before *the fruits of the earth*—but certainly before that illustrious person, even the MESSIAH."—"*Righteousness goeth before* HIM, *and directeth his goings in the way.*"

As to the word rendered *the blessing*, and applied to the redemption; the same word is so used by Jeremiah, thus: "Behold, the days come, that I will perform *that good thing* (the blessing) which I have promised . . . at that time will I cause to grow up unto David the Branch of righteousness" (ch. xxxiii. 14, 15). And as to the Messiah being here described, partly as springing up from the earth; so says Isaiah: "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious; and *the fruits of the earth* shall be excellent and comely." But this evangelical prophet, in another place, has the very same complication of images with that found in the psalm before us. For Isaiah also has *the heavens*, with their *rightousness;* and *the earth*, with *its salvation:* "Drop down, ye *heavens* from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let *the earth* open, and let *them* bring forth salvation." But, "let *them* bring forth"—who, or what can be here meant by *them*, but *the heavens* and the *earth?* It is heaven and earth which are here represented as *bringing forth*, and introducing the Saviour of the world. For what else can be here meant as *brought forth* by *them?* What, but HE alone; who, deriving his *divine* nature from heaven, and his *human* from the earth was (what no other being ever was) both GOD and MAN.—*Benjamin Kennicott.*

Verse 1.—"*Thy land.*" *The land* of Jehovah the poet calls it, in order to point out the close relation of God to it, and to the people thereof, and so confirm the *favour* of God towards it. For this land God has chosen as the dwelling-place of his people, true religion, and his own presence; this also in his own time He himself had trodden in the person of his Son, and in it He first gathered and founded his Church.—*Venema.*

Verse 1.—"*The captivity of Jacob.*" All true believers are the sons of Jacob, and the seed of Abraham; as well the believing Gentiles, who are the sons of Jacob according to the Spirit, as the believing Jews the sons of Jacob according to the flesh; and the Church of these true Jacobins and Israelites is the land of the Lord, and the *captivity* here mentioned is bondage under sin. In this captivity Satan is the gaoler, the flesh is our prison, ungodly lusts are the manacles, a bad conscience the tormentor, all of them against us; only Christ is *Emmanuel*, God with us; he turneth away the captivity of Jacob in forgiving all his offences, and in covering all his sins.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 2.—"*Thou hast forgiven the iniquity.*" נָשָׂאתָ עָוֹן, *nasatha avon*, *Thou hast borne*, or *carried away*, *the iniquity.* An allusion to the ceremony of the scape-goat.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 2.—"*Thou hast covered all their sin.*" When God is said *to cover sin*, he does so, not as one would cover a sore with a plaster, thereby merely hiding it only; but he covers it with a plaster that effectually cures and removes it altogether.—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 2.—"*Selah.*" Rabbi Kimchi regards it as a sign to elevate the voice. The authors of the Septuagint translation appear to have regarded it as a musical or rythmical note. Herder regarded it as indicating a change of note; Mathewson as a musical note, equivalent, perhaps, to the word *repeat.* According to Luther and others, it means *silence.* Gesenius explains it to mean, "Let the instruments play and the singers stop." Wocher regards it as equivalent to *sursum corda*—up, my soul! Sommer, after examining all the seventy-four passages in which the word occurs, recognises in every case "an actual appeal or summons to Jehovah." They are calls for aid and prayers to be heard, expressed either with entire directness, or if not in the imperative, "Hear, Jehovah!" or Awake, Jehovah! and the like, still earnest addresses to God that he would remember and hear, &c. The word itself he regards as indicating a blast of the trumpets by the priests. Selah, itself, he thinks an

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abridged expression, used for Higgaion Selah—Higgaion indicating the sound of the stringed instruments and Selah a vigorous blast of trumpets.—*From the "Bibliotheca Sacra," quoted by Plumer.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou hast taken away all thy wrath.*" Or *gathered* it; sin occasions wrath, and the people of God are as deserving of it as others; but the Lord has gathered it up, and poured it forth upon His son, and their surety; hence nothing of this kind shall ever fall upon them, either here or hereafter; and it is taken away from them, so as to have no sense, apprehension, or conscience of it, which before the law had wrought in them, when pardon is applied unto them, which is what is here meant.—*John Gill.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou hast turned thyself.*" Here are six *hasts* drawing in the next *turn*, verse 4. God hath, and therefore God will is a strong medium of hope, if not a demonstration of Scripture-logic. See 2 Cor. i. 10.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—"*Cause thine anger toward us to cease.*" The phrase, *break thine indignation towards us*, (that is, wherewith thou art angry with us, in order that it may cease of itself,) comprehends the abolition of the signs and the effects of anger. The word פרר, for this is the root to be taken, properly denotes a *breaking* by means of *notches* and *gaps*, as when the *edge* of anything is broken by many notches and gaps, and it is made utterly worn and useless. *Indignation*, so long as it is vigorous and spreads its effects, has an *edge*, which smites and pierce; but it is considered blunt and broken, when it ceases to exert itself, and produces evils no longer, this they affirm of the *anger* of God.—*Venema.*

Verse 6.—"*Wilt thou not revive us again?*" The Hebrew is, *Wilt thou not return and revive us?* We translate the verb *return* by the adverb *again*: "*Wilt thou not revive us again?*" Thou hast given us many *revives:* when we were as *dead men*, and like carcases rotting in the grave, thou didst revive us, wilt thou not revive us once more, and act over those powerfully merciful works and strong salvations once more, or again?—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 6.—"*That thy people may rejoice in thee.*" Bernard in his 15th Sermon on Canticles says. Jesus is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, joy in the heart. Is any among us sad? Let Jesus enter the heart, and thence spring to the countenance, and behold, before the rising brightness of his name, every cloud is scattered, serenity returns. Origen in his 10th Hom. on Genesis, has the remark, Abraham rejoiced not in present things, neither in the riches of the words, nor deeds of time. But do you wish to hear, whence he drew his joy? Listen to the Lord speaking to the Jews, John viii. 56: "Your father, Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad:" hope heaped up his joys.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 6.—"*That thy people may rejoice in thee.*" When God changeth the cheer of his people, their joy should not be in the gift, but in the Giver.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 6.—It is the most natural thing, the most delightful thing, for the people of God to rejoice in God. God is the fountain of joy, and whom should he fill with it but his people? And whom should his people breathe it into again but him? This posture God delights to have them in; this posture they delight to be in; but this cannot be in that estate of death and captivity wherein God for a long season shutteth them up. "The living, the living shall praise thee," but alas, the dead cannot.—*John Pennington*, 1656.

Verse 6.—Truly sin kills. Men are dead in trespasses and sins, dead in law, dead in their affections, dead in a loss of comfortable communion with God. Probably the greatest practical heresy of each age is a low idea of our undone condition under the guilt and dominion of sin. While this prevails we shall be slow to cry for *reviving* or *quickening*. What sinners and churches need is quickening by the Holy Ghost.—*William S. Plumer.*

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Verses 6—7.—"*Wilt thou not revive us*," by the first and spiritual resurrection, and so thy people, quickened from a life of sin to a life of grace, will rejoice in thee, not in themselves, presuming nothing on their own power. And in order that these things may be fulfilled in us, "*Shew us, O Lord, thy mercy*," that is, Christ, through whom thou hast pitied the human race, shew him to us after this exile that we may see him face to face.—*Richardus Hampolus.*

Verse 7.—"*Thy mercy.*" It is not merely of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, but all is mercy, from first to last,—mercy that met us by the way,—mercy that looked upon us in our misery,—mercy that washed us from our sins in his own blood,—mercy that covered our nakedness and clad us in his own robe of righteousness,—mercy that led and guided us by the way,—and mercy that will never leave nor forsake us till mercy has wrought its perfect work in the eternal salvation of our souls through Jesus Christ.—*Barton Bouchier*.

Verse 8.—"*I will hear*," etc. The true attitude for a sinner to take in the presence of divine revelation, is that of a *listener*. To enter the place of a *doer* before you have occupied that of a *listener*, is to reverse God's order, and throw everything into confusion. Adam tried this plan, and found it a failure. He tried "works." He "sewed fig leaves together," but it was no use. He could not even satisfy his own conscience, or remove his guilty fear. He had to listen to the voice of God—to hearken to divine revelation.—"*Things New and Old.*" 1859.

Verse 8.—"*I will hear*," etc. The eye as a mere organ of sense must give place to the ear. Therefore it is wittily observed, that our Saviour commanding the abscession of the offending hand, foot, and eye, (Mark ix. 43—47), yet never spake of the ear. If thy hand, thy foot, or thine eye, cause thee to offend, deprive thyself of them; but part not with thine ear, for that is an organ to derive unto thy soul's salvation. As Christ says there, a man may enter into heaven, lamed in his feet, as Mephibosheth, blind in his sight, as Barzillai, maimed in his hand, as the dry-handed man in the gospel; but if there be not an ear to hear of the way, there will be no foot to enter into heaven. If God be not first in the ear, he is neither sanctifiedly in the mouth, nor comfortably in the heart. The Jews had eyes to see Christ's miracles, but because they had no ears to hear his wisdom, therefore they had no feet to enter into his kingdom. The way into the house is by the door, not by the window: the eye is but the window of the heart, the ear is the door. Now Christ stands knocking at the door, not at the window. Rev. iii. 20. And he will not come in at the window, but at the door: "He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep." John x. 2. He comes now in by his oracles, now by his miracles. "To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice," ver. 3. The way to open and let him in is by the door; to hear his voice. There was a man in the gospel blind and deaf: blind eyes is ill; but deaf ears, worse. It is bad to have the eyes seeled,* but worse to have the ears sealed up. Open your ears therefore to this heavenly voice. Bernard hath this description of a good ear: Which willingly hears what is taught, wisely understands what it heareth, and obediently practises what it understandeth. O give me such an ear, and I will hang on it jewels of gold, ornaments of praise.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 8.—"*I will hear*," etc. My text carries in it a poetical allusion to the consulting of the cloud of glory, which was between the cherubims, and to the receiving answer from it, upon all critical occasions. David turned his thoughts from all the other views he might have, to this, "*I will hear what God the Lord will speak*"; that so he might depend wholly on the assurances that he should receive of God's favour, upon the repentance and prayers of the people; and in consideration of God's covenant with them, he knew the answer would be "*peace;*"

* *Seel*, to close up: a term in falconry.

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which being the form of salutation in those ages, among friends, imported an entire reconciliation. So that by *speaking peace* is to be understood an assurance of God's love and favour "*to his people, and to his saints:*" that is, to the people that was *sanctified*, and dedicated to the service of God by so many federal rites.—*Gilbert Burnet*, 1643—1714-5.

Verse 8.—"*I will hear what God the Lord will speak.*" Carnal men speak peace to themselves on account of some supposed goodness in themselves. And unsound professors steal peace from God's promises, such as Isai. lv. 7, Hosea xiv. 4. But an upright heart will not be satisfied without hearing God speak peace to his heart by his Spirit. And for this he will pray, and wait, and hearken, and when God speaks peace, there comes such sweetness with it, and such discovery of his love, as lays a powerful influence on the soul not to turn again to folly. This peace is an humbling, melting peace, which brings humiliation to the soul as well as joy; but this never happens when men speak peace to themselves.—*John Berridge*, 1716—1793.

Verse 8.—"*I will hear what God the* LORD *will speak*," etc. His prayer being finished, and he having spoke, he now stands and listens, as you use to do when you expect an echo, what echo he should have, what answer would be returned from heaven, whether his prayer had already come: "*I will hear what the Lord will speak;*" or, as some read it, "*I will hear what the Lord doth speak:*" for sometimes there is a present echo, a speedy answer returned to a man's heart, even ere the prayer is half finished. "*He will speak peace.*" When the child of God wants peace, he can have no peace till God speak it. . . . . Let God's people be in never so great distress, yet it is an easy thing for God to give peace to them. Mark the expression here used: it is but *speaking* peace, that is, it is as easy for him to give peace as it is for you to speak a word; it is no more to him. Then our comfort is, that as he only must do it, so he easily can do it, even with a word.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 8.—"*He will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints,*" etc. The voice of the Lord is comfortable, and his words are sweet to those that fear him. It is a plain sign that all is not well with us, when the voice of God doth cast us into fear, when we are afraid to hear the word preached, when just reproofs of our sins are unwelcome to us, and anger us, and make us think the less of our minister that chideth and threateneth us.

A good life and a well-governed conversation doth not fear the voice of God; the word of God is the light which God hath set up in his church, to guide her feet in the ways of peace. They that do evil hate the light, and will not come near it, lest their works should be reproved; the children of the light resort to it, and call upon God: "Search my veins and my heart, and see if there be any way of wickedness in me."—*Edward Marbury.*

Verse 8.—"*To his people and to his saints.*" He will give *prosperity* to *the people* in general; and to *his saints* —his followers, in particular.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 8.—"*To his saints.*" It is remarkable that we have the suffrage of a celebrated Jewish writer, Kimchi, to understand the word rendered "*saints*" in this place, of the godly among the Gentiles, as distinguished from the Lord's people, the Jews.—*John Fry.*

Verse 8.—"*He will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not return again to folly.*" This imports that if his *saints turn again to folly*, which by woful experience we find too frequently done, God may *change his voice*, and turn his peace, formerly spoken, into a warlike defiance to their conscience.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 8.—"*But let them not turn again to folly.*" If God did not in the end speak peace, they would indeed return to folly. For his end of speaking peace is, that they might not return to folly: Ps. cxxv. 3, "The rod of the wicked shall not always be upon the righteous, lest they put forth their hand to iniquity;" therefore, at the last verse, "peace shall be upon Israel" . . . . .

As it is a rule in physic still to maintain nature, and therefore when that shall be in hazard to be destroyed, they leave giving purging physic, and give

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cordials; so doth God with his people: though with purging physic he often brings their spirits very weak and low, yet he will uphold and maintain their spirits, so as they shall not fail and be extinguished, but then he will give cordials to raise them up again.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 8.—It is hard to know, in spiritual exercises, whether it be more difficult to attain some good frame, or to keep and maintain it when it is attained; whether more seriousness is required for making peace with God, or for keeping of it when made; whether more diligence should be in preparing for a communion, or more watchfulness after it: sure both are required; and it was our blessed Lord's word, Matt. xxvi. 41, after the first celebration of his supper, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Here that saying holds eminently: "*Non minor est virtus, quam quærere, parta tueri:*" no less virtue and valour is requisite to maintain, than to make a purchase or conquest. In the words there are, 1. A great mercy promised from the Lord to his people, viz., "*He will speak peace to them.*" 2. A special caveat and advertisement given them, pointing at their hazard: "*But let them not turn again to folly:*" that is, let not his people and saints to whom he hath spoken peace, return to sin; let them beware of bourding*-and dallying with God's mercy, and of turning his grace into wantonness, of cooling in their affections to him, of slipping back to their old way, and of embracing their old lovers and idols: for that is folly, even in folio, to speak so.—*James Durham, in "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ."*

Verse 9.—"*That glory may dwell in our land.*" What land the true church of Christ, the saints and they that fear God, do dwell in; there doth *glory* dwell: there God, there Christ by his Spirit bringing righteousness and salvation to such a society, is glorious; and for his presence the people are glorious; and the land glorious above all other lands whatsoever.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 10.—"*Mercy and truth; righteousness and peace.*"—Note, four virtues stand out prominently in the incarnation; namely, mercy, truth, righteousness and peace, or love producing peace. These were like four steps of the throne of Christ, or four princes standing near and accompanying Him. 1. On the right hand, is mercy presenting the olive. 2. On the left, truth holding the white lily. 3. Before Him walks justice bearing the balance. 4. Peace follows Him, having a *cornucopiæ* full of flowers, and scattering the flowers around.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 10.—"*Mercy and truth; righteousness and peace.*" These four divine attributes parted at the fall of Adam, and met again at the birth of Christ. Mercy was ever inclined to save man, and Peace could *not* be his enemy; but Truth exacted the performance of God's threat,—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" and Righteousness could not but give to every one his due, Jehovah must be true in all his ways, and righteous in all his works. Now there is no religion upon earth, except the Christian, which can satisfy the demands of all these claimants, and restore an union between them; which can show how God's word can be true, and his work just, and the sinner, notwithstanding, find mercy, and obtain peace.—*George Horne.*

Verse 10.—This is a remarkable text, and much has been said on it; but there is a beauty in it which, I think, has not been noticed. *Mercy* and *peace* are on one side; *truth* and *righteousness* on the other. *Truth* requires *righteousness; mercy* calls for *peace.* They meet together on the way; one going to make inquisition for sin, the other to plead for reconciliation. Having met, their differences on certain considerations, not here particularly mentioned, are adjusted; and their mutual claims are blended together in one common interest; on which *peace* and *righteousness* immediately embrace. Thus, *righteousness* is given to *truth*, and *peace* is given to *mercy.* Now, *where* did these meet?

* *Bourding*=jesting.

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In Christ Jesus. *When* were they reconciled? When he poured out his life on Calvary.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 10.—"*Mercy and truth are met together.*" 1. They meet together *in God;* for "all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth," Ps. xxv. 9; *mercy* in making, and *truth* in keeping his promise to his people. Paul saith, Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the *truth* of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his *mercy.* Rom. xv. 8. God promised his Son unto the Jews, and he gave him in the fulness of time to be both a light to the Gentiles, and glory of his people Israel; herein shewing his *mercy* more principally to the Gentiles, his *truth* unto the Jews, and so his mercy and truth embraced each other, so that he made both people but one, to wit, one flock, in one sheepfold, under one shepherd.

If we take *truth and righteousness* for God's justice in punishing, *mercy and peace* for his graciousness in pardoning; yet they meet together in all his ways unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies. For as the mercies of the wicked are full of cruelty, so the very judgments of God upon his servants are full of mercy. In his wrath he remembers pity; punishing a little, that he may pardon a great deal; destroying the flesh only to save the spirit, 1 Cor. v. 5. *Misericordiæ est aliquando subtrahere misericordiam.* It was good for Joseph that he was a captive; good for Naaman that he was a leper; good for Bartimæus that he was blind, and for David that he was in trouble. Bradford thanked God more of his prison, than of any parlour or pleasure. All things are for the best unto the faithful, and so God's "*mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other,*" his mercy being just, and his justice being merciful; but God in giving his only Son unto the world, more abundantly shewed his *mercy and justice kissing one another.* His *justice* that every soul that sins should die; but his *mercy* desires not the death of a sinner. Ezekiel xxxiii. 11 . . . . . .

2. Righteousness and peace meet together *in man;* so Augustine expounds it: an unjust man is full of quarrels, like Ishmael, "every man's hand is against him, and his hand against every man;" but he who is righteous, and giveth every man his due, shall have peace, so much as is possible with all men, especially with his own self and soul. Righteousness and peace are so near, so dear, that thou canst not have the one without the other.

3. Righteousness and peace meet *in Christ,* God's man; for by these two, some divines understand the Old Testament and the New. The Law doth exact *justice,* requiring of a malefactor "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot;" but the Gospel is full of *mercy* and *peace,* saying unto the sinner, who truly repenteth him of his sins, and unfeignedly believes the word of promise, "Son, be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee;" "Daughter be of good cheer, thy faith hath made thee whole;" "Go thy way, thy belief hath saved thee;" "Behold, thou art now made whole, sin no more." These two testaments meet together in Christ, as in their proper centre, they "*kissed each other*" on this [Christmas] day, because the gospel performed what the law promised.—*John Boys.*

Verse 10.—When our Lord spake that parable of the prodigal son, and represented the Father as seeing his child afar off in his misery, and how he had compassion on him, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him, one cannot but feel what a touching and tender illustration he has given of this most exquisite passage of his own word: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verses 10, 11.—Mercy and Peace if they had met, or Truth and Righteousness, either of the two, it had not been strange. But for these that seem to be in opposition to do it, that makes this meeting marvellous in our eyes.

Will you stay a little and take a view of the parties? Four they are. These four, 1. Mercy, and 2. Truth, 3. Righteousness, and 4. Peace. Which quaternion at the first sight divides itself into two and two. Mercy and Peace, they two pair well; they be *collectaneæ,* as Bernard saith of them in one place,

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'bed-fellows,' sleep together; *collactaneæ*, as in another place, 'sucked one milk, one breast' both. And as these two, so the other two; Truth and Righteousness seem to be of one complexion and disposition, and commonly take part together. Of these Mercy seems to favour us; and Peace no enemy to us or to any (seeing we must speak of them as of persons); mild and gentle persons both. For Righteousness I know not well what to say: *gestat gladium*, (bears the sword), and I fear *non frustra* (not in vain). Nor of Truth, who is *vera* and *severa*, 'severe' too otherwhile. These I doubt are not like affected. The reason of my doubt. One of them, Righteousness, it is told here for great news, that she but "looked down hitherwards from heaven." Before then she would not have done that. A great sign it is of heart-burning, when one will not do so much as look at another—not endure his sight. We cannot promise ourselves much of her. No, nor of Truth. One was so bold in a place to say, *omnis homo mendax* (Rom. iii. 4), and feared no challenge for it. By that it seems all stands not well with her neither. So then two for us, two against us.

For their order. Mercy is first, and Peace last. With both ends we shall do well enough. God send us to do but so with the midst! Yet this is not amiss that they which favour us less are in the midst; hemmed in on both sides, closed about with those that wish us well; and they between us and them. On the one side, Mercy before; on the other, Peace behind another; that in this double meeting Mercy sorts not herself, goes not to Righteousness; nor Righteousness to her, but to Peace. A kind of cross meeting, as it were, there is—the better hope of accord. Mercy and Righteousness have no symbolizing quality at all, no hope of them; but Truth with Mercy hath. There is truth as well in the promise of Mercy as in the threat of justice.—*Lancelot Andrewes.*

Verse 11.—"*Truth shall spring.*" The literal sense is, that the promises which for a long time are not fulfilled, and seem like seeds or roots hidden and concealed under ground, when they shall be fulfilled, shall be considered to spring up, to grow. etc.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 11.—"*Spring.*" The Metaphor is taken from flowers and trees. In the Greek the expression is ἀνέτειλε, that is, *has sprung* like the morning, for ἀνατέλλω and ἀνατολή are properly said of the rising of the sun and moon. —*Le Blanc.*

Verse 11.—"*Shall look down.*" This *looking down*, נִשְׁקָף rendered generally παρακύπτω in the Greek, implies such a look as in 1 Pet. i. 12, angels give into the things of salvation, and such a look as the disciples gave into the sepulchre. It is really the *Righteous One* who is resting over them in complacent love, not as in Psa. xiv. 2, and liii. 2, but fulfilling Ps. cii. 19, 20.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 12.—It has sometimes been objected that the Christian doctrine of a Millennium cannot be true, for the earth could not support the teeming millions that would naturally be found upon it, if wars and vices should cease to waste its population. But omitting other and pertinent answers that have been given, we find one here that covers the whole ground, *the earth shall yield her increase.* Now and then the season is unusually propitious, and we have a specimen of what God can do when he chooses. He can without any miracle make it many times more fruitful than it has ever been.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 13.—"*Righteousness shall go before him,*" etc. The meaning of this difficult verse may probably be as follows:—Righteousness shall go before Him (Jehovah), and shall make his footsteps a pathway for his servants to walk in.—*Ernest Hawkins.*

Verse 13.—"*Shall set us in the way of his steps.*" It is reported in the Bohemian History, that St. Wenceslaus, their king, one winter night going to his devotions, in a remote church, barefooted in the snow and sharpness of unequal and pointed ice, his servant Podavivus, who waited upon his master's

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piety, and endeavoured to imitate his affections, began to faint through the violence of the snow and cold; till the king commanded him to follow him, and set his feet in the same footsteps, which his feet should mark for him: the servant did so, and either fancied a cure, or found one; for he followed his prince, helped forward with shame and zeal to his imitation, and by the forming footsteps for him in the snow. In the same manner does the blessed Jesus; for, since our way is troublesome, obscure, full of objection and danger, apt to be mistaken, and to affright our industry, he commands us to mark his footsteps, to tread where his feet have stood, and not only invites us forward by the argument of his example, but he hath trodden down much of the difficulty, and made the way easier and fit for our feet. For he knows our infirmities, and himself hath felt their experience in all things but in the neighbourhoods of sin; and therefore he hath proportioned a way and a path to our strength and capacities, and, like Jacob, hath marched softly and in evenness with the children and the cattle, to entertain us by the comforts of his company, and the influence of a perpetual guide.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

Verse 13 (*last clause*).—The sinner who feels his need of salvation, is *set—in the way of his steps;* as Bartimæus sat by the way-side begging, by which way Jesus walked; and when he came where he was, heard his prayer, and restored him his sight.—*Adam Clarke.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—There is, I. Captivity. 1. Of the people of God. 2. Although they are the people of God. 3. Because they are the people of God. "You only have I known," etc. II. Restoration from Captivity: "Thou hast brought back," etc. 1. The fact. 2. The Author: "Thou:" by thine own power; in thine own manner; at thine own time. III. The cause of the Restoration; the favour of God: "Thou hast been favourable." 1. On account of favour past: "Thou hast." 2. On account of favour in reserve.

Verse 2.—I. The subjects of forgiveness: "Thy people." 1. By choice. 2. By redemption. 3. By effectual calling. II. The time of forgiveness: "Thou hast forgiven," etc. III. The method of forgiveness. 1. Forgiven. Heb. borne, same word as in Lev. xvi. 22: "The goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities." 2. Covered; as the mercy seat covered the law that had been broken. IV. The extent of forgiveness: "*all* their sin."

Verse 3.—I. The language of penitence. It is implied here that the wrath was, 1. Great: 2. Just: "*thy* wrath." II. The language of faith. 1. In the grace of pardon: "Thou hast turned away wrath." We could not, by anything we could do or suffer. 2. In the method of pardon: "Turned away." Turned it from us to our Surety. III. The language of praise: "Thou hast—thou hast."

Verse 4.—I. In what salvation consists. 1. In the removal of God's enmity from us. 2. In the removal of our enmity to him. II. By whom it is accomplished. By the God of salvation. 1. He causes his anger toward us to cease, and 2. Our anger toward him. III. How it is obtained? By prayer: "Turn us," etc.

Verse 6.—I. Revivals imply decline. 1. That there is grace to be revived. 2. That this grace has declined. II. Revivals are from God: "Wilt not thou," etc.: they cannot be got up by men. III. Revivals are frequently needed: "Wilt not thou revive us *again.*" IV. Revivals are in answer to prayer: "Wilt thou not," etc. V. Revivals are occasions for great joy. 1. *To* the saints. 2. *In* God.

Verse 7.—I. Salvation is God's work: "Thy salvation." 1. The plan is his. 2. The provision is his. 3. The condition is his. 4. The application is his. 5. The consummation is his. II. Salvation is God's gift. 1. Of his mercy: "Show us thy mercy." 2. Of his grace: "Grant us," etc. III. Salvation is God's

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answer to prayer. 1. It is the first object of prayer. 2. It includes every other.

Verse 8.—I. We should look for an answer to prayer. Having spoken to God, we should hear what he has to say to us in reply. 1. In his word. 2. In his providence. 3. By his Spirit in our own souls. II. We should look for an answer of peace: "He will speak peace." III. We should avoid whatever might deprive us of that peace: "But let them not turn," etc.

Verse 10.—I. The attributes displayed in man's salvation. 1. Mercy in the promise. 2. Truth in its fulfilment. 3. Righteousness in the manner of its fulfilment. 4. Peace in its results. II. These attributes harmonized in man's salvation. 1. How? "Met together—kissed each other." 2. Why? Each on its own account. All on each others' account. 3. Where? Met and kissed, (1.) In the covenant. (2.) At the incarnation. (3.) At the cross. (4.) At the conversion of every sinner. (5.) At the completion of the saints in heaven.

Verse 12.—I. All spiritual good is from God: "The Lord will give," etc. 1. Is repentance a good thing? The Lord will give repentance. Is pardon? "The Lord," etc. 3. Is faith? 4. Is justification? 5. Is regeneration? 6. Is growth in grace? 7. Is preservation unto the end? 8. Is eternal glory? "The Lord will give," etc. II. All temporal good is from God. "Our land," etc. 1. In a lawful manner *our* land. 2. In the use of appointed means: "Shall yield her increase," etc. 3. In dependence upon the divine blessing. "Who giveth fruitful seasons," etc. Spiritual good is not less given in the use of appointed means.

Verse 13.—I. The righteousness by which we are justified long precedes our justification: this righteousness is "gone before," etc. II. Our justification by that righteousness precedes our sanctification. III. The righteousness of sanctification invariably follows that of justification.

[*All the above are by the Rev. Geo. Rogers.*]

Verse 8.—*Thomas Goodwin* has three sermons upon this verse, (*First clause*), entitled The Return of Prayers. (*Second clause*).—Tidings of Peace. (*Last clause*) —The Folly of Relapsing after Peace spoken.

Verse 8 (*last clause*).—They should not turn again to folly, I. Because it will be a greater aggravation in sinning. It is made the aggravation of Solomon's sin (1 Kings xi. 9), that "God had appeared to him twice." II. The second reason is intimated in the word "*folly*:" as if the Lord should have said, Set aside the unkindness and wrong you do to me, yet therein you befool yourselves; you will have the worst of it.—*T. Goodwin.*

Verse 6.—Joy in the Lord the best evidence of revived piety.

Verse 12.—The fertility of our spheres of labour the gift of God.

Verse 10.—The Pulpit, vol. XXVIII, 1836, contains a sermon by R. W. Sibthorpe, in which the preacher, I. Considers the harmony of the divine perfections in *the redemption of a sinner.* II. The wisdom of the divine dealings in *the calling and guidance of the believer;* so that mercy, truth, etc., each becomes in turn conspicuous in our experience. III. The completeness of the divine image *in the sanctified soul*, so that the perfected saint abounds in mercy and truth, is filled with peace, and is conformed to his righteous Lord.

WORK ON THE EIGHTY-FIFTH PSALM.

In an old quarto volume of 788 pages, containing Expositions of several passages of Scripture, is a short Exposition of this Psalm (pp. 452—64) entitled "*A Taste of the Breathings, Pantings, Waitings, and Hopes of Israel after the true Saviour, and his effectual Redemption.*" There is no Author's name, but some previous owner has written "*John Pennington*" on the title page: date 1656.

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PSALM LXXXVI.

TITLE.—A Prayer of David. *We have here one of the five psalms entitled* Tephillahs *or prayers. This psalm consists of praise as well as prayer, but it is in all parts so directly addressed to God that it is most fitly called "a prayer." A prayer is none the less but all the more a prayer because veins of praise run through it. This psalm would seem to have been specially known as David's prayer; even as the ninetieth is "the prayer of Moses." David composed it, and no doubt often expressed himself in similar language; both the matter and the wording are suitable to his varied circumstances and expressive of the different characteristics of his mind. In many respects it resembles Psalm XVII., which bears the same title, but in other aspects it is very different; the prayers of a good man have a family likeness, but they vary as much as they agree. We may learn from the present psalm that the great saints of old were accustomed to pray very much in the same fashion as we do; believers in all ages are of one genus. The name of God occurs very frequently in this psalm, sometimes it is Jehovah, but more commonly Adonai, which it is believed by many learned scholars was written by the Jewish transcribers instead of the sublimer title, because their superstitious dread led them to do so: we, labouring under no such tormenting fear, rejoice in Jehovah, our God. It is singular that those who were so afraid of their God, that they dared not write his name, had yet so little godly fear, that they dared to alter his word.*

DIVISION.—*The psalm is irregular in its construction but may be divided into three portions, each ending with a note of gratitude or of confidence: we shall therefore read from* 1 *to* 7, *and then, after another pause at the end of verse* 13, *we will continue to the end.*

EXPOSITION.

BOW down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I *am* poor and needy.

2 Preserve my soul; for I *am* holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.

3 Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily.

4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

5 For thou, Lord, *art* good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

6 Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications.

7 In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.

1. "*Bow down thine ear, O* LORD, *hear me.*" In condescension to my littleness, and in pity to my weakness, "bow down thine ear, O LORD." When our prayers are lowly by reason of our humility, or feeble by reason of our sickness, or without wing by reason of our despondency, the Lord will bow down to them, the infinitely exalted Jehovah will have respect unto them. Faith, when she has the loftiest name of God on her tongue, and calls him Jehovah, yet dares to ask from him the most tender and condescending acts of love. Great as he is he loves his children to be bold with him. "*For I am poor and needy*"—doubly a son of poverty, because, first, poor and without supply for my needs, and next, needy, and so full of wants, though unable to supply them. Our distress is a forcible reason for our being heard by the Lord God, merciful,

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and gracious, for misery is ever the master argument with mercy. Such reasoning as this would never be adopted by a proud man, and when we hear it repeated in the public congregation by those great ones of the earth who count the peasantry to be little better than the earth they tread upon, it sounds like a mockery of the Most High. Of all despicable sinners those are the worst who use the language of spiritual poverty while they think themselves to be rich and increased in goods.

2. "*Preserve my soul.*" Let my life be safe from my enemies, and my spiritual nature be secure from their temptations. He feels himself unsafe except he be covered by the divine protection. "*For I am holy.*" I am set apart for holy uses, therefore do not let thine enemies commit a sacrilege by injuring or defiling me: I am clear of the crimes laid to my charge, and in that sense innocent; therefore, I beseech thee, do not allow me to suffer from unjust charges: and I am inoffensive, meek, and gentle towards others, therefore deal mercifully with me as I have dealt with my fellow men. Any of these renderings may explain the text, perhaps all together will expound it best. It is not self-righteous in good men to plead their innocence as a reason for escaping from the results of sins wrongfully ascribed to them; penitents do not bedaub themselves with mire for the love of it, or make themselves out to be worse than they are out of compliment to heaven. No, the humblest saint is not a fool, and he is as well aware of the matters wherein he is clear as of those wherein he must cry "*peccavi.*" To plead guilty to offences we have never committed is as great a lie as the denial of our real faults. "*O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.*" Lest any man should suppose that David trusted in his own holiness he immediately declared his trust in the Lord, and begged to be saved as one who was not holy in the sense of being perfect, but was even yet in need of the very elements of salvation. How sweet is that title, "my God," when joined to the other, "thy servant;" and how sweet is the hope that on this ground we shall be saved; seeing that our God is not like the Amalekitish master who left his poor sick servant to perish. Note how David's poor *I am* (or rather the *I* repeated without the *am*) appeals to the great I AM with that sacred boldness engendered by the necessity which breaks through stone walls, aided by the faith which removes mountains.

3. "*Be merciful unto me, O Lord.*" The best of men need mercy, and appeal to mercy, yea to nothing else but mercy; they need it for themselves, and crave it eagerly of their God as a personal requisite. "*For I cry unto thee daily.*" Is there not a promise that importunity shall prevail? May we not, then, plead our importunity as an argument with God? He who prays every day, and all the day, for so the word may mean, may rest assured that the Lord will hear him in the day of his need. If we cried sometimes to man, or other false confidences, we might expect to be referred to them in the hour of our calamity, but if in all former times we have looked to the Lord alone, we may be sure that he will not desert us now. See how David pleaded, first that he was poor and needy, next that he was the Lord's set-apart one, then that he was God's servant and had learned to trust in the Lord, and lastly that he had been taught to pray daily; surely these are such holy pleadings as any tried believer may employ when wrestling with a prayer-hearing God, and with such weapons the most trembling suppliant may hope to win the day.

4. "*Rejoice the soul of thy servant.*" Make my heart glad, O my Master, for I count it my honour to call myself again and again thy servant, and I reckon thy favour to be all the wages I could desire. I look for all my happiness in thee only, and therefore "*unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.*" As the heliotrope looks to the sun for its smile, so turn I my heart to thee. Thou art as the brazen serpent to my sick nature, and I lift up my soul's eye to thee that I may live. I know that the nearer I am to thee the greater is my joy, therefore be pleased to draw me nearer while I am labouring to draw near. It is not easy to lift a soul at all; it needs a strong shoulder at the wheel when a heart sticks in the miry clay of despondency: it is less easy to lift a soul up to

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the Lord, for the height is great as well as the weight oppressive; but the Lord will take the will for the deed, and come in with a hand of almighty grace to raise his poor servant out of the earth and up to heaven.

5. "*For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive.*" Good at giving and forgiving; supplying us with *his* good, and removing *our* evil. Here was the great reason why the Psalmist looked to the Lord alone for his joy, because every joy-creating attribute is to be found in perfection in Jehovah alone. Some men who would be considered good are so self-exaltingly indignant at the injuries done them by others, that they cannot forgive; but we may rest assured that the better a being is, the more willing he is to forgive, and the best and highest of all is ever ready to blot out the transgressions of his creatures. "*And plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.*" God does not dispense his mercy from a slender store which perchance may be so impoverished as to give out altogether, but out of a cornucopiæ he pours forth the infinite riches of his mercy: his goodness flows forth in abounding streams towards those who pray and in adoring worship make mention of his name. David seems to have stood in the cleft of the rock with Moses, and to have heard the name of the Lord proclaimed even as the great lawgiver did, for in two places in this psalm he almost quotes *verbatim* the passage in Exodus xxxiv. 6—"The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

6. "*Give ear, O* LORD, *unto my prayer.*" Even the glory which his spirit had beheld did not withdraw him from his prayer, but rather urged him to be more fervent in it; hence he implores the Lord to hear his requests. "*Attend to the voice of my supplications.*" Here are repetitions, but not vain repetitions. When a child cries it repeats the same note, but it is equally in earnest every time, and so was it with the suppliant here. Note the expression, "the voice of my supplications," as if they were not all voice but were partly made up of inarticulate noise, yet amid much that was superfluous there really was a distinct voice, an inner meaning, a living sense which was the heart's intention. This he would have the Lord sift out from the chaff, and hear amid the mingled din. May our prayers never be voiceless; may the soul's intent always give them a live core of meaning.

7. "*In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.*" A pious resolve backed by a judicious reason. It is useless to cry to those who cannot or will not hear; once convince men that prayer has no effect upon God, and they will have no more of it. In these busy days and especially in troublous times, men cannot afford to waste time in entreaties which must be unavailing. Our experience confirms us in the belief that Jehovah the living God really does aid those who call upon him, and therefore we pray and mean to pray, not because we are so fascinated by prayer that for its own sake we would continue in it if it proved to be mere folly and superstition, as vain philosophers assert; but because we really, indeed, and of a truth, find it to be a practical and effectual means of obtaining help from God in the hour of need. There can be no reason for praying if there be no expectation of the Lord's answering. Who would make a conscience of pleading with the winds, or find a solace in supplicating the waves? The mercy seat is a mockery if there be no hearing nor answering. David, as the following verses show, believed the Lord to be a living and potent God, and indeed to be "God alone," and it was on that account that he resolved in every hour of trouble to call upon him.

8 Among the gods *there is* none like unto thee, O Lord; neither *are there any works* like unto thy works.

9 All nations whom thou has made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name.

10 For thou *art* great, and doest wondrous things: thou *art* God alone.

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11 Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.

12 I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore.

13 For great *is* thy mercy towards me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.

8. "*Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord.*" There are gods by delegated office, such as kings and magistrates, but they are as nothing in the presence of Jehovah; there are also gods by the nomination of superstition, but these are vanity itself, and cannot be compared with the living and true God. Even if the heathen idols were gods, none of them in power or even in character, could be likened unto the self-existent, all-creating God of Israel. If every imaginary deity could start into actual existence, and become really divine, yet would we choose Jehovah to be our God, and reject all others. "*Neither are there any works like unto thy works.*" What have the false gods ever made or unmade? What miracles have they wrought? When did they divide a sea, or march through a wilderness scattering bread from the skies? O Jehovah, in thy person and in thy works, thou art as far above all gods as the heavens are above the nethermost abyss.

9. "*All nations whom thou hast made,*" and these include all mankind, since they all come of the first Adam—thy creature, and their lives are all distinct creations of thine omnipotence. All these "*shall come*" with penitent hearts, in thine own way, to thine own self, "*and worship before thee, O Lord.*" Because thou art thus above all gods, the people who have been so long deceived shall at last discover thy greatness, and shall render thee the worship which is thy due: thou hast created them all, and unto thee shall they all yield homage. This was David's reason for resorting to the Lord in trouble, for he felt that one day all men would acknowledge the Lord to be the only God. It makes us content to be in the minority to-day, when we are sure that the majority will be with us to-morrow, ay, and that the truth will one day be carried unanimously and heartily. David was not a believer in the theory that the world will grow worse and worse, and that the dispensation will wind up with general darkness, and idolatry. Earth's sun is to go down amid tenfold night if some of our prophetic brethren are to be believed. Not so do we expect, but we look for a day when the dwellers in all lands shall learn righteousness, shall trust in the Saviour, shall worship thee alone, O God, "*and shall glorify thy name.*" The modern notion has greatly damped the zeal of the church for missions, and the sooner it is shown to be unscriptural the better for the cause of God. It neither consorts with prophecy, honours God, nor inspires the church with ardour. Far hence be it driven.

10. "*For thou art great.*" He had before said, "thou art good;" it is a grand thing when greatness and goodness are united; it is only in the Divine Being that either of them exists absolutely, and essentially. Happy is it for us that they both exist in the Lord to an equal degree. To be great and not good might lead to tyranny in the King, and for him to be good and not great might involve countless calamities upon his subjects from foreign foes, so that either alternative would be terrible; let the two be blended, and we have a monarch in whom the nation may rest and rejoice. "*And doest wondrous things.*" Being good, he is said to be ready to forgive: being great, he works wonders: we may blend the two, for there is no wonder so wonderful as the pardon of our transgressions. All that God does or makes has wonder in it; he breathes, and the wind is mystery; he speaks, and the thunder astounds us; even the commonest daisy is a marvel, and a pebble enshrines wisdom. Only to fools is anything which God has made uninteresting: the world is a world of wonders. Note that the verb *doest* is in the present, the Lord is doing wondrous things, they are transpiring before our eyes. Where are they? Look

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upon the bursting buds of spring or the maturing fruits of autumn, gaze on the sky or skim the sea, mark the results of providence and the victories of grace, everywhere at all times the great *Thaumaturge* stretches forth his rod of power. "*Thou art God alone.*" Alone wast thou God before thy creatures were; alone in godhead still art thou now that thou hast given life to throngs of beings; alone for ever shalt thou be, for none can ever rival thee. True religion makes no compromises, it does not admit Baal or Dagon to be a god; it is exclusive and monopolizing, claiming for Jehovah nothing less than all. The vaunted liberality of certain professors of modern thought is not to be cultivated by believers in the truth. "Philosophic breadth" aims at building a Pantheon, and piles a Pandemonium; it is not for us to be helpers in such an evil work. Benevolently intolerant, we would, for the good of mankind, as well as for the glory of God, undeceive mankind as to the value of their compromises,—they are mere treason to truth. Our God is not to be worshipped as one among many good and true beings, but as God alone; and his gospel is not to be preached as one of several saving systems, but as the one sole way of salvation. Lies can face each other beneath one common dome; but in the temple of truth the worship is one and indivisible.

11. "*Teach me thy way, O* LORD." Instruct me thus at all times, let me live in thy school; but teach me now especially since I am in trouble and perplexity. Be pleased to shew me the way which thy wisdom and mercy have prepared for my escape; behold I lay aside all wilfulness, and only desire to be informed as to thy holy and gracious mind. Not *my* way give me, but *thy* way teach me, I would follow thee and not be wilful. "*I will walk in thy truth.*" When taught I will practise what I know, truth shall not be a mere doctrine or sentiment to me, but a matter of daily life. The true servant of God regulates his walk by his master's will, and hence he never walks deceitfully, for God's way is ever truth. Providence has a way for us, and it is our wisdom to keep in it. We must not be as the bullock which needs to be driven and urged forward because it likes not the road, but be as men who voluntarily go where their trusted friend and helper appoints their path.

"*Unite my heart to fear thy name.*" Having taught me one way, give me one heart to walk therein, for too often I feel a heart and a heart, two natures contending, two principles struggling for sovereignty. Our minds are apt to be divided between a variety of objects, like trickling streamlets which waste their force in a hundred runnels; our great desire should be to have all our life-floods poured into one channel and to have that channel directed towards the Lord alone. A man of divided heart is weak, the man of one object is *the* man. God who created the bands of our nature can draw them together, tighten, strengthen, and fasten them, and so braced and inwardly knit by his uniting grace, we shall be powerful for good, but not otherwise. To fear God is both the beginning, the growth, and the maturity of wisdom, therefore should we be undividedly given up to it, heart, and soul.

12. "*I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart.*" When my heart is one, I will give thee all of it. Praise should never be rendered with less than all our heart, and soul, and strength, or it will be both unreal and unacceptable. This is the second time in the psalm that David calls the Lord "my God," the first time he was in an agony of prayer (verse 2), and now he is in an ecstacy of praise. If anything can make a man pray and praise, it is the knowledge that the Lord is his God. "*And I will glorify thy name for evermore;*" into eternity gratitude will prolong its praise. God has never done blessing us, let us never have done blessing him. As he ever gives us grace, let us ever render to him the glory of it.

13. "*For great is thy mercy toward me.*" Personal experience is ever the master singer. Whatever thou art to others, to me thy mercy is most notable. The psalmist claims to sing among the loudest, because his debt to divine mercy is among the greatest. "*And thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.*" From the direst death and the deepest dishonour David had

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been kept by God, for his enemies would have done more than send him to hell had they been able. His sense of sin also made him feel as if the most overwhelming destruction would have been his portion had not grace prevented, therefore does he speak of deliverance from the nethermost abode of lost spirits. There are some alive now who can use this language unfeignedly, and he who pens these lines most humbly confesses that he is one. Left to myself to indulge my passions, to rush onward with my natural vehemence, and defy the Lord with recklessness of levity, what a candidate for the lowest abyss should I have made myself by this time. For me, there was but one alternative, great mercy, or the lowest hell. With my whole heart do I sing, "Great is thy mercy towards me, and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell."

The psalmist here again touches a bold and joyful note, but soon he exchanges it for the mournful string.

14 O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent *men* have sought after my soul; and have not set thee before them.

15 But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

16 O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid.

17 Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see *it*, and be ashamed: because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

14. "*O God, the proud are risen against me.*" They could not let God's poor servant alone, his walk with God was as smoke to their eyes, and therefore they determined to destroy him. None hate good men so fiercely as do the high-minded and domineering. "*And the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul.*" Unitedly oppressors sought the good man's life; they hunted in packs, with keen scent, and eager foot. In persecuting times many a saint has used these words in reference to Papal bishops and inquisitors. "*And have not set thee before them.*" They would not have molested the servant if they had cared one whit for the master. Those who fear not God are not afraid to commit violent and cruel acts. An atheist is a misanthrope. Irreligion is akin to inhumanity.

15. "*But thou, O Lord.*" What a contrast! We get away from the hectorings and blusterings of proud but puny men to the glory and goodness of the Lord. We turn from the boisterous foam of chafing waves to the sea of glass mingled with fire, calm and serene. "*Art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.*" A truly glorious doxology, in which there is not one redundant word. As we have before observed, it is mainly transcribed from Exodus xxxiv. 6. Here is compassion for the weak and sorrowing, grace for the undeserving, longsuffering for the provoking, mercy for the guilty, and truth for the tried. God's love assumes many forms, and is lovely in them all. Into whatsoever state we may be cast, there is a peculiar hue in the light of love which will harmonize with our condition; love is one and yet sevenfold, its white ray contains the chromatic scale. Are we sorrowful? We find the Lord full of compassion. Are we contending with temptation? His grace comes to our aid. Do we err? He is patient with us. Have we sinned? He is plenteous in mercy. Are we resting on his promise? He will fulfil it with abundant truth.

16. "*O turn unto me.*" As though the face of God had been before averted in anger, the suppliant pleads for a return of conscious favour. One turn of God's face will turn all our darkness into day. "*And have mercy upon me,*"

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that is all he asks, for he is lowly in heart; that is all he wants, for mercy answereth all a sinner's needs. "*Give thy strength unto thy servant.*" Gird me with it that I may serve thee, guard me with it that I may not be overcome. When the Lord gives us his own strength we are sufficient for all emergencies, and have no cause to fear any adversaries. "*And save the son of thine handmaid.*" He meant that he was a home-born servant of God. As the sons of slaves were their master's property by their birth, so he gloried in being the son of a woman who herself belonged to the Lord. What others might think a degrading illustration he uses with delight, to show how intensely he loved the Lord's service; and also as a reason why the Lord should interpose to rescue him, seeing that he was no newly-purchased servant, but had been in the house from his very birth.

17. "*Shew me a token for good.*" Let me be assured of thy mercy by being delivered out of trouble. "*That they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed.*"

> "Some token of thy favour show,
> Some sign which all my foes may see;
> And fill'd with blank confusion know,
> My comfort and my help in thee."

What bodes good to me shall make them quail and blush. Disappointed and defeated, the foes of the good man would feel ashamed of what they had designed. "*Because thou,* LORD, *hast holpen me, and comforted me.*" God doth nothing by halves, those whom he helps he also consoles, and so makes them not merely safe but joyful. This makes the foes of the righteous exceedingly displeased, but it brings to the Lord double honour. Lord, deal thou thus with us evermore, so will we glorify thee world without end. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—The prophet David has penned two psalms, which he has eminently appropriated to himself as his own: the one is styled *David's prayer*, though many other psalms are prayers—it is Psalm lxxxvi.; the other *David's praise*, Ps. cxlv. The first his *tephilla*, the latter his *tehilla;* in each of these he makes a solemn rehearsal of the very words of Moses, in Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7. In Psalm lxxxvi. he brings them in as they were a support unto his faith in his distresses from sins and miseries, to which use he puts them, ver. 3, 4, 6, & 7. And again, ver. 16, 17, he makes a plea of these words by way of prayer. In Psalm cxlv., he brings them in as they are an *elogium* or celebration of the glorious nature and excellencies of God, to excite the sons of men to love and praise him.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Title.—This Psalm was published under the title of "*A Prayer of David*"; not as if David sung all his prayers, but into some of his songs he inserted prayers; for a psalm will admit the expression of any pious and devout affections. But it is observable how very plain the language of this psalm is, and how little there is in it of poetical flights or figures, in comparison with some other psalms; for the flourishes of wit are not the proper ornaments of prayer.—*Matthew Henry.*

Title.—There was much, very much, of God's peculiar character, his glorious name, brought to view in the close of the last Psalm. This may account for its being followed by another, "*A Prayer of David,*" almost equally full of the character of Jehovah. The key-note of this Psalm is Jehovah's name.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

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Whole Psalm.—Christ prays throughout the whole of this Psalm. All the words are spoken exclusively by Christ, who is both God and man. *Psalt. Cassiodori*, 1491.

Whole Psalm.—In this Psalm Christ the Son of God and Son of Man, one God with the Father, one man with men, to whom we pray as God, prays in the form of a servant. For he prays for us, and he prays in us, and he is prayed to by us. He prays for us as our Priest. He prays in us as our Head. He is prayed to by us as our God.—*Psalt. Pet. Lombard.* 1474.

Verse 1.—"*Bow down thine ear, O* LORD." As the careful physician doth to his feeble patient: so Basil glosseth here.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 1—4.—"*Poor*," "*holy*," "*trusteth*," "*I cry*." The petitioner is first described as *poor*, then *holy*, next *trusting*, after that *crying*, finally, *lifted up to God*. And each epithet has its fitting verb; *bow down* to the poor, *preserve* the holy, *save* the trusting, *be merciful* to him who cries, *rejoice* the lifted-up. It is the whole gamut of love from the Incarnation to the Ascension; it tells us that Christ's humiliation will be our glory and joy.—*Neale and Littledale's Commentary.*

Verse 2.—"*Holy*." The word has been variously translated:—*Godly*, De Muis, Ainsworth and others; *charitable*, or *beneficent*, Piscator; *merciful* or *tenderhearted*, Mariana; *diligently* or *earnestly compassionate*, Vatablus; *meek*, Calvin; *a beloved one*, Version of American Bible Union; *one whom thou lovest*, Perowne; a *devoted* or *dedicated man*, Weiss.

Verse 2.—"*For I am Holy*." Some have objected to David's pleading his own good character; but if he did not go beyond the truth, and the occasion called for it, there was nothing wrong in his so doing. Job, David, Peter, John and Paul all did it, Job xxvii. 5; Ps. cxvi. 16; John xxi. 15—17; Rev. i. 10; 1 Cor. ix. 1. Nor is it presumptuous to ask God to show mercy to us for we show it to others; or to forgive us for we forgive others, Matt. v. 7; vi. 14, 15. —*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 2.—"*I am holy . . . thy servant which trusteth in thee.*" They that are holy, yet must not trust in themselves, or in their own righteousness, but only in God and his grace.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—"*Save thy servant that trusteth in thee.*" When God saves his servant, he saves what belongs to himself; and, when he saves him that trusts in him, he shows himself to be just and faithful, in carrying out what he promised.—*Bellarmine.*

Verses 2—5.—The aspirations after holiness which are found in this Psalm, coupled with its earnest invocation of mercy from the God with whom there is forgiveness, render it peculiarly applicable to those whose daily access is to a throne of needed grace. Christians know that while their *standing* is the blameless perfection of the Lord their righteousness, they are in many things offenders still. Nor do we ever fully prove the preciousness of Jesus as our portion, except we are drawn to him by that Spirit which reveals to us a nakedness and poverty within ourselves, which his blessed fulness can alone redress.

There is a consciousness of personal sanctification through faith (verse 2) associated with an acutely sensitive perception of intrinsic worthlessness, such as only finds relief in the remembrance of unaltered grace (verse 5), which, to the exercised spirit of one really growing in the knowledge of God, will address itself with an especial acceptance.—*Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 3.—"*Be merciful unto me.*" Lest any should by the former words, ("*I am holy*,") suspect him to be a merit-monger, he beggeth mercy with instancy and constancy of request.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—"*I cry unto thee daily.*" A great difference between saints and sinners in prayer is that sinners who pray at all, pray only when they are in

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trouble, whereas saints *cry daily* unto God. Compare Job xxvii. 10.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 4.—"*Rejoice the soul of thy servant*," etc. As I have not found rest in anything created, I have raised up my soul on the wings of thought and desire to thee my Creator. Love bears one's soul up; and it has been truly said, that the soul is more where it loves, than where it actually is. Thought and desire are the wings of love; for he that loves is borne on to, and abides in, what he loves, by thinking constantly on, and longing for, the object of his love. Whoever truly, and from his heart, loves God, by thinking on him and longing for him, lifts up his soul to God; while, on the contrary, whoever loves the earth, by thinking on and coveting the things of the earth, lets his soul down to its level.—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 4.—"*Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift my soul.*" If thou hadst corn in thy rooms below, thou wouldest take it up higher, lest it should grow rotten. Wouldest thou remove thy corn, and dost thou suffer thy heart to rot on the earth? Thou wouldest take thy corn up higher: lift up thy heart to heaven. And how can I, dost thou say? What ropes are needed? What machines? What ladders? Thy affections are the steps; thy will the way. By loving thou mountest, by neglect thou descendest. Standing on the earth thou art in heaven, if thou lovest God. For the heart is not so raised as the body is raised: the body to be lifted up changes its place: the heart to be lifted up changes its will.—*Augustine.*

Verse 4.—"*Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul*," intimates that he had brought himself to the Lord as a living sacrifice, even as the *heave-offering* in the tabernacle—to show that it belonged to God and to his altar, and, that man had no part in it—was lifted up by the hands of the priests.—*Benjamin Weiss.*

Verse 4.—"*I lift up my soul.*" It denotes the devotion, fervency, heartiness, and sincerity of his prayer; the doing of it with a true heart, the lifting up of the heart with the hands unto God, Lam. iii. 41; or by way of offering unto the Lord, not the body only, but the soul or heart also; or as a deposition committed into his hands.—*John Gill.*

Verse 4.—"*Lord.*" Here, and in all the verses in this psalm where אֲדֹנָי, *Adonai*, occurs, many MSS. read יְהוֹה, *Yehovah*. The Jews, out of reverence to the incommunicable name Jehovah pronounce אֲדֹנָי where יְהוֹה is in the text. It is, therefore, not improbable that יְהוֹה is the true reading in all these places.—*Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 5 —"*For thou, Lord, art good*," and whither should beggars go but to the door of the good house-keeper?—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5.—"*Ready to forgive.*" The mercy of God is a ready mercy, and his pardons are ready for his people; his pardons and mercies are not to seek, he hath them at hand, he is "*good and ready to forgive.*" Whereas most men, though they will forgive, yet they are not *ready* to forgive, they are hardly brought to it, though they do it at last. But God is "*ready to forgive*"; he hath, as it were, pardons ready drawn (as a man who would be ready to do a business, he will have such writings as concern the passing of it ready); there is nothing to do but to put in the date and the name; yea indeed, the date and the name are put in from all eternity. Thus the Scripture speaks to show how forward God is to do good; he needs not set his heart to it; his heart is ever in the exactest fitness.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—"*Plenteous in mercy.*" It is a thing marvellously satisfactory and pleasing to the heart of a man to be still taking from a great heap; and upon this ground are those proverbial sayings, There is no fishing like to a fishing in the sea, no service like the service of a king: because in one there is the greatest plenty and abundance of that kind of pleasure that fishers look after; and for them that serve, and must live by their service, there is none like that

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of princes, because they have abundance of reward and opportunity whereby to recompense the services of those that do wait and attend upon them. . . .

And upon the same ground is it that the Scriptures, in several places, do not only assert and testify that God is merciful and gracious, but abundant in mercy and full of grace; and not simply that there is redemption in him, but *plenteousness* of redemption: Ps. ciii. 8, cxxx. 7; Isai. lv. 7; "Let the wicked forsake his way," etc.; "Let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy; and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon." The commodity which we stand in need of is mercy and the pardon of our sins, in case we have been unholy and ungodly creatures; this commodity is abundantly in God. There it is treasured up as waters are in the store-house of the sea; there is no end of the treasures of his grace, mercy, pardon, and compassion. There is no man, being in want, but had ten times rather go to a rich man's door to be relieved, than to the door of a poor man, if he knoweth the rich man to be as liberal and bountifully disposed as the poor man can be.—*John Goodwin.*

Verse 6.—"*Supplications.*" תַּחֲנוּנוֹתַי, *deprecations.* The Psalmist forms a peculiar Hebrew word, feminine plural, not found elsewhere, to convey more impressively the idea of suppliant weakness.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verses 8—10.—There are two kinds of doubt which are wont in the hour of temptation to assail the soul: the doubt as to God's *willingness*, and the doubt as to God's *power* to succour. The first of these the Psalmist has already put from him; he now shows that he has overcome the second. God is able as well as willing to help, and every being on the face of the earth who receives help, receives it from the hand of Him who is the only God, and who shall one day be recognized (so speaks the strong prophetic hope within him, ver. 9) as the only God.—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Verses 9, 10.—"*All nations shall worship before thee,*" because as *King of Nations*, thou art great, thy sovereignty absolute and incontestable, thy Majesty terrible and unsupportable, thy power universal and irresistible, thy riches vast and inexhaustible, thy dominion boundless and unquestionable; and for the proof of this, "*thou doest wondrous things,*" which all nations admire, and from whence they might easily infer that "*thou art God alone;*" not only none like thee, but none beside thee.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 11.—"*Teach me thy way:*" "*I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart.*" Here is the "Via, Veritas, Vita" of the Gospel (John xiv. 6). "Via tua, Veritas tua, Vita tua, Christus." Christ is our Way, Truth, and Life, because he is Man united to God, and is one substance with the Father.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 11.—"*Teach me.*" There is no point on which the world is more dark than that of its own ignorance—we might truly say, "it is ignorant of its ignorance"—it knows enough when it learns by rote a few first principles of religion; it comforts itself that it is not atheistical because it believes that there is a God; but as to knowing his ways, laws, mind, or any such things, with them it has nothing at all to do. The people of the world do not care for enlightenment; they feel no pressing need for it; in all probability they have an instinctive feeling that if enlightened they would know a little more than they wish to know, that their newly-acquired knowledge would interfere with their old habits and ways, and this is one reason why all spiritual teaching which goes beneath the surface is distasteful to the majority of men. They cannot bear to be brought into contact with God, in anything but a general way; the particulars of his character may not agree over well with the particulars of their lives!

It is the fashion in the present day to talk of man's enlightenment, and to represent human nature as upheaving under its load, as straining towards a

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knowledge of truth; such is not in reality the case, and whenever there is an effort in the mind untaught of the Spirit, it is directed towards God as the great *moral* and not as the great *spiritual* Being. A man untaught of the Holy Ghost may long to know a *moral*, he can never desire to know a *spiritual* Being.—*John Hyatt*, 1767—1826.

Verse 11.—"*Teach.*" The common version of the verb here is too vague, as it fails to bring out the peculiar suitableness of the term to express the kind of teaching here specifically meant. The original meaning of the Hebrew word is *to point out* or *mark* the way.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 11.—"*I will walk in thy truth.*" Conform to Scripture. Let us lead Scripture lives. Oh that the Bible might be seen to be printed in our lives! Do what the Word commands. Obedience is an excellent way of commenting upon the Bible.

Let the Word be the sun-dial by which you set your life. What are we the better for having the Scriptures, if we do not direct all our speeches and actions according to it? What is a carpenter better for his rule about him, if he sticks it at his back, and never makes use of it for measuring and squaring? So, what are we the better for the rule of the Word, if we do not make use of it, and regulate our lives by it?—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 11.—"*I will walk in thy truth.*" *Walking*, in the Scripture, takes in the whole of our conversation or conduct: and to walk *in* anything, intends a fulness of it. For a man to *walk in* pride, is something more than to be proud: it says, that pride is his way, his element; that he is wholly under the influence of it.—*William Jay.*

Verse 11.—"*Unite my heart to fear thy name.*" The *end* which he desired to secure was that he might truly fear God, or properly reverence and honour him; the *means* which he saw to be necessary for this was that his "*heart*" might be "*united*" in this one great object; that is, that his heart might be single in its views and purposes; that there might be no distracting purposes; that one great aim might be always before him. The *word* rendered *unite*—יָחַד, *yâhhad*—occurs as a verb only in three places. In Gen. xlix. 6 it is rendered *united:* "Unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou *united.*" In Isai. xiv. 20 it is translated *joined:* "Thou shalt not be *joined* unto them." The *adverb*—יַחַד, *ya-hhad*—occurs often, and is rendered *together*, Gen. xiii. 6; xxii. 6, 8, 19; xxxvi. 7; *et sæpe.* The *idea* is that of union, or conjunction; of being together; of constituting *one;* and this is accomplished in the heart when there is one great ruling object before the mind which nothing is allowed to interfere with. It may be added, that there is no more appropriate prayer which a man can offer than that his heart *may* have such unity of purpose, and that nothing may be allowed to interfere with that one supreme purpose. —*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 11.—"*Unite my heart,*" &c. Sincerity drives but one design, and that is to please and enjoy God; and what can more establish and fix the soul in the hour of temptation than this? The reason why the hypocrite is unstable in all his ways, is given us by the apostle: he is "a double-minded man," a man of two souls in one body; as a profane wretch once boasted, that he had one soul for God, and another for anything. But all the designs of a gracious heart are united in one; and so the entire stream of his affections runs strong.

It is base by-ends and self-interests, that, like a great many ditches cut out of the bank of a river, draw away the stream out of its proper channel, and make its waters fail. But if the heart be *united* for God, then we may say of such a Christian, as was said of a young Roman, "What he does is done with all his might." A man of only one design, puts out all his strength to carry it; nothing can stand before him.

Sincerity brings a man's will into subjection to the will of God; and this being done, the greatest danger and difficulty is over with such a man. This is that holy oil which makes the wheels of the soul run nimbly, even in the difficult paths of obedience.—*John Flavel.*

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Verse 11.—"*Unite my heart.*"

Give me thine heart but as I gave it thee:
Or give it me at least as I
Have given mine
To purchase thine.
I halv'd it not when I did die;
But gave myself wholly to set thee free.

The heart I gave thee was a living heart;
And when thy heart by sin was slain,
I laid down mine
To ransom thine,
That thy dead heart might live again,
And live entirely perfect, not in part.

But whilst thine heart's divided, it is dead;
Dead unto me, unless it live
To me alone,
It is all one
To keep all, and a part to give:
For what's a body worth without an head!

Yet, this is worse, that what thou keep'st from me
Thou dost bestow upon my foes·
And those not mine
Alone, but thine;
The proper causes of thy woes,
From whom I gave my life to set thee free.

Have I betroth'd thee to myself, and shall
The devil, and the world, intrude
Upon my right,
E'en in my sight?
Think not thou canst me so delude:
I will have none, unless I may have all.

I made it all, I gave it all to thee,
I gave all that I had for it:
If I must lose,
I'd rather choose
Mine interest in all to quit:
Or keep it whole, or give it whole to me.

—*Francis Quarles, in "The School of the Heart."*

Verse 11.—"*Unite my heart to fear thy name.*"

In knotts, to be loosed never,
Knitt my heart to thee for ever,
That I to thy name may beare
Fearful love and loving feare.

—*Francis Davison.*

Verse 12.—"*I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name.*" We glorify God by praising him. Doxology, or praise, is a God-exalting work. Ps. l. 23. "*Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.*" The Hebrew word, *Bara*, to create, and *Barak*, to praise, are little different, because the end of creation is to praise God. Though nothing can add to God's essential glory, yet praise exalts him in the eyes of others. When we praise God, we spread his fame and renown, we display the trophies of his excellency. In this manner the angels glorify him; they are the choristers of heaven, and do trumpet forth his praise. Praising God is one of the highest and purest acts of religion. In prayer we act like men; in praise we act like angels. Believers are called "temples of God," 1 Cor. iii. 16. When our tongues praise, then the organs of God's spiritual temple are sounding. How sad it is that God hath no more glory from us in this way! Many are full of murmuring and discontent, but seldom bring glory to God, by giving him the praise due to his name. We read of the saints having harps in their hands, the emblems of praise. Many have tears in their eyes and complaints in their mouths, but few have harps in their hands, blessing and glorifying God. Let

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us honour God this way. Praise is the quit-rent we pay to God: while God renews our lease, we must renew our rent.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 12.—"*I will praise thee, O Lord,*" &c. Such a soul as David was is enlarged to talk high of God: "*I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify thy name for evermore.*" Alas! poor creature, how canst thou proclaim him "*for evermore*"? A soul fired with desire to praise God, burns after both more perfect things and more lasting than it is able to perform. "To will is present with it," etc. See but the reachings and longings of such a soul, how it swells in desires to glorify God!—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 12.—"*With all my heart.*" When my *heart* is *united* to fear thy name. then shall I praise thee with my whole heart.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 13.—"*Hell*" is put metaphorically for great and extreme dangers, or miseries which seem irrecoverable and remediless; these are figuratively called *hell*, because hell, properly taken, is a place from whence there is no recovery. There's no release from the chains of darkness: all changes are on earth; heaven and hell know none. When David praises the Lord *for delivering his soul from the lowest hell*, he meaneth an estate on earth of the lowest and deepest danger imaginable: mercy helped him at the worst. To be as low as hell, is to be at the lowest.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 13.—"*The lowest hell.*" According to Jewish traditions, there are seven different regions, in the abode of departed souls.—*Daniel Creswell.*

Verse 13.—"*Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.*" Some one having a troublesome cause was to be sent to prison: another comes and defends him; what does he say when he thanks him? Thou hast delivered my soul out of prison. A debtor was to be tortured: his debt is paid; he is said to be delivered from being tortured. They were not in all these evils; but because they were in such due course towards them, that unless aid had been brought, they would have been in them, they rightly say that they are delivered from thence, whither they were not suffered by their deliverers to be taken.—*Augustine.*

Verses 13, 16.—There is no stronger argument of God's infallible readiness to grant our requests, than the experience of his former concessions. So David reasons, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine," 1 Sam. xvii. 37. This is the argument *a priori*, the voice of a strong faith, that persuades the conscience God will be gracious to him, because he hath been gracious. The prophet thus often comforted his soul: "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress;" therefore, "have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer," Ps. iv. 1. So, "Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell;" therefore, "*O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me.*" Let the justiciaries deduce arguments from their own present merits, my soul from God's former mercies. Thou, O Lord, madest me good, restoredst me when I was evil; therefore have mercy upon me, miserable sinner, and give me thy salvation. Thus Paul grounded his assurance: because the Lord had stood with him, and delivered him out of the lion's mouth; therefore the Lord shall deliver me still, from every evil work, and preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom. 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 15.—"*Thou, O Lord, Adonai, art a God;* El, the strong God, *full of compassion;*" the same words as Moses useth. Instead of *Jehovah*, *Adonai* is used, "O Lord;" but then *El*, strong God, is the same word.

The meaning is, let all the strength and power thou the strong God hast in thee be for my advantage. Now, is it not a bold request to say, Lord, wilt thou give me all thy strength to help me? A very bold request indeed; but his mercy moves him to grant it. Thus then petition him: Thou art a God merciful and gracious, give thy strength to me! Thou, O God, givest all thy attributes up to thy children, to serve their advantage, as well as to serve thy own glory; give me thy strength!—*Thomas Goodwin.*

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Verse 15.—"*Full of compassion.*" The original word *Rachum* is very emphatical; it signifies such tenderness as parents have toward their children when their bowels yearn within them.—"*Critical and Practical Exposition of the Pentateuch.*" 1748.

Verse 16.—"*Save the son of thine handmaid.*" Deliver me, who am as completely thy property, as the offspring of a female slave born in her master's house, and which belongs of right to him. Gen. xiv. 14; Jer. ii. 14.—*William Keatinge Clay.*

Verse 17.—"*Shew me a token for good.*" These words do not, as some think, necessarily imply David's asking for some specific or miraculous token; he regards deliverance itself as a token. We ask whether it be not true, that in the same measure as we recognise the mysteriously governing influence of God in every-day events, we regard those things as signs and miracles, which to others appear common-place?—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 17.—Perhaps, the "*token for good*" means that spiritual joy which he asked for in the beginning of the Psalm, when he said, "*Rejoice the soul of thy servant;*" for such joy to a holy soul in tribulation is the clearest sign of the grace of God, and on the sight of it all manner of persecutors are confounded; and then the meaning would be, "*shew me a token for good;*" give me the grace of that spiritual joy that will appear exteriorily in my countenance, "*that they which hate me may see*" such calmness and tranquillity of soul, "*and be confounded*"; for thou, O Lord, hast helped me in the struggle, consoled me in my sorrow, and hast already converted my sadness into interior joy and gladness.—*Robert Bellarmine.*

Verse 17.—"*Shew me a token for good,*" may be rendered "make me a sign for good." Weiss paraphrases it, "make of me such a sign or monument of good that all my enemies may be arrested by it, and be daunted at injuring a man so assisted by the Lord."

Verse 17.—"*Hast holpen me,*" in struggle; "*and comforted me,*" in sorrow.—*Augustine.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—I. A singular request—that the Lord should bow his ear. II. A singular plea—"I am poor and needy." III. The singular grace of God will answer the request, because singular grace has made the petitioner feel his need.

Verse 2.—I. The blessing sought is present, spiritual, complete and final preservation. II. Our reasons for expecting it are—1. Our belonging to God—"I am holy." 2. God's belonging to us—"my God." 3. Our faith, which has the promise. 4. Our fruits, which prove our faith—"thy servant."

Verse 3.—Importunity. 1. When she pleads—"daily." 2. How she pleads—"I cry." 3. To whom she pleads—"unto thee." 4. For what she pleads—"be merciful."

Verse 3.—"I will cry daily" for pardoning, sanctifying, assisting, preserving, providing and guiding mercy.—*William Jay.*

Verse 4.—I. The believer's joy is from God—"Rejoice," &c. II. The believer's joy is in God.—"unto thee," &c.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—I. The great lift. I. The heavy weight—"my soul." II. The weak worker—"I lift." III. The great height—"unto thee." IV. The appointed machinery—means of grace; and, V. The expected aid—"Rejoice," &c.

Verse 5.—Encouraging thoughts of God. 1. He has goodness in his essence. 2. He has forgiveness in readiness. 3. He has mercy in action, flowing forth

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from him plenteously. 4. His very discrimination is gracious—"all them that call upon him."

Verse 6.—The praying man desires above all things an answer. Objections to such an expectation. Grounds for continuing to expect, and duties incumbent upon those who realise such expectations.

Verse 6.—"The voice of supplication." It is the voice of weakness, of penitence, of faith, of hope, of the new nature, of knowledge, &c.

Verse 7.—1. Help needed. 2. Help sought. 3. Help found.—*G. R.*

Verse 7.—I. A time to be expected—"day of my trouble." II. A resolve to be practised—"I will call upon thee." III. A result to be experienced—"thou wilt answer me."

Verse 7.—Prayer is the design of trouble, the evidence that it is sanctified, its solace, and the medium of deliverance from it.—*William Jay.*

Verse 8.—I. God is one; the only God: characters of false gods inferior far. II. His works are unique. Nature, providence, grace, all peculiar in many respects. A good theme for a thoughtful preacher.

Verse 9.—The certain conversion of the world as opposed to modern theories.

Verse 10.—I. God is "great," therefore great things may be expected of him. II. He is unsearchable, therefore "wondrous things" may be expected of him. III. He is irresistible, therefore impossibilities to others may be expected of him: "Thou art God alone."—*G. R.*

Verse 11.—In the disposition of mind which is expressed in these words, the believer stands opposed to four descriptions of character. I. The ignorant and thoughtless sinner, who neither regards his way nor his end. II. The Antinomian, who is zealous for doctrines, and averse from the practice of religion. III. The Pharisee, who disregards religious sentiment, and makes practice all in all. IV. The hypocrite, who appears to be divided between religion and the world.—*John Hyatt*, 1811.

Verse 11.—The Christian as a scholar, a man of action, and a man of devotion.

Verse 11.—Holiness taught, truth practised, God adored; and thus the life perfected.

Verse 11 (*middle clause*).—We should walk in the belief of the truth, its practice, enjoyment, and profession.—*William Jay.*

Verse 11 (*third clause*).—The necessity, benefit, and reasonableness of wholeheartedness in religion.

Verse 12.—The art of praising God by heart.

Verse 13.—I. Where I might have been—"the lowest hell." II. What thou hast done for me—"hast delivered." III. What thou art doing—"great is thy mercy."

Verse 13 (*first clause*).—God's mercy *great* in election, redemption, calling, pardon, upholding, etc. It *is* so, at this very moment, in supplying my needs, preserving from danger, consoling in sorrow, etc. Great is thy mercy *towards me*—so great a sinner, with such needs, so provoking, so full of doubts, etc.

Verses 13, 14, 15.—The three verses describe salvation, consequent persecution, and all-sufficient consolation.

Verse 15.—The shades of the light of love. Compassion upon suffering, grace towards unworthiness, long-suffering to provocation, mercy towards sin, truth towards the promise.

Verse 16.—I. My pedigree—"son of thine handmaid." II. My occupation—"thy servant." III. My character—needing "mercy." IV. My request—"turn unto me."

Verse 16.—In what respects a servant of God may be girt with divine power.

Verse 17.—What inward feelings and outward providences are "tokens for good."

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PSALM LXXXVII.

TITLE.—A Psalm or Song for the sons of Korah. *A sacred hymn and a national lyric. A theocracy blends the religious and the patriotic ideas in one; and in proportion as nations become Christianized, their popular songs will become deeply imbued with pious sentiments. Judged by this standard, our own land is far in arrears. This "psalm or song" was either composed by the sons of Korah, or dedicated to them: as they kept the doors of the house of the Lord, they could use this beautiful composition as a psalm within the doors, and as a song outside.*

SUBJECT AND DIVISION.—*The song is in honour of Zion, or Jerusalem, and it treats of God's favour to that city among the mountains, the prophecies which made it illustrious, and the honour of being a native of it. Many conceive that it was written at the founding of David's city of Zion, but does not the mention of Babylon imply a later date? It would seem to have been written after Jerusalem and the Temple had been built, and had enjoyed a history, of which glorious things could be spoken. Among other marvels of God's love in its later history, it had been untouched by Sennacherib when other cities of Israel and Judah had fallen victims to his cruelty. It was in Hezekiah's reign that Babylon became prominent, when the ambassadors came to congratulate the king concerning his recovery, at that time also Tyre would be more famous than at any period in David's day. But as we have no information, and the point is not important, we may leave it, and proceed to meditate upon the psalm itself. We have no need to divide so brief a song.*

EXPOSITION.

HIS foundation *is* in the holy mountains.

2 The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

3 Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.

4 I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that knew me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this *man* was born there.

5 And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her.

6 The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, *that* this *man* was born there. Selah.

7 As well the singers as the players on instruments *shall be there:* all my springs *are* in thee.

1. "*His foundation is in the holy mountains.*" The psalm begins abruptly, the poet's heart was full, and it gained vent on a sudden.

> "God's foundation stands for ever
> On the holy mountain towers;
> Sion's gates Jehovah favours
> More than Jacob's thousand bowers."

Sudden passion is evil, but bursts of holy joy are most precious. God has chosen to found his earthly temple upon the mountains; he might have selected other spots, but it was his pleasure to have his chosen abode upon Zion. His election made the mountains holy, they were by his determination ordained and set apart for the Lord's use.

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The foundation of the church, which is the mystical Jerusalem, is laid in the eternal, immutable, and invincible decrees of Jehovah. He wills that the church shall be, he settles all arrangements for her calling, salvation, maintenance and perfection, and all his attributes, like the mountains round about Jerusalem, lend their strength for her support. Not on the sand of carnal policy, nor in the morass of human kingdoms, has the Lord founded his church, but on his own power and godhead, which are pledged for the establishment of his beloved church, which is to him the chief of all his works. What a theme for meditation is the founding of the church of God in the ancient covenant engagements of eternity; the abrupt character of this first verse indicates long consideration on the part of the writer, leading up to his bursting forth in wonder and adoration. Well might such a theme cause his heart to glow. Rome stands on her seven hills and has never lacked a poet's tongue to sing her glories, but more glorious far art thou, O Ziona, among the eternal mountains of God: while pen can write or mouth can speak, thy praises shall never lie buried in inglorious silence.

2. "*The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.*" The gates are put for the city itself. The love of God is greatest to his own elect nation, descended from his servant Jacob, yet the central seat of his worship is dearer still; no other supposable comparison could have so fully displayed the favour which Jehovah bore to Jerusalem,—he loves Jacob best and Zion better than the best. At this hour the mystical teaching of these words is plain. God delights in the prayers and praises of Christian families and individuals, but he has a special eye to the assemblies of the faithful, and he has a special delight in their devotions in their church capacity. The great festivals, when the crowds surrounded the temple gates, were fair in the Lord's eyes, and even such is the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. This should lead each separate believer to identify himself with the church of God; where the Lord reveals his love the most, there should each believer most delight to be found. Our own dwellings are very dear to us, but we must not prefer them to the assemblies of the saints; we must say of the church—

> "Here my best friends, my kindred dwell:
> Here God, my Saviour reigns."

3. "*Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.*" This is true of Jerusalem. Her history, which is the story of the nation of which she is the capital, is full of glorious incidents, and her use and end as the abode of the true God, and of his worship, was preëminently glorious. Glorious things were taught in the streets, and seen in her temples. Glorious things were foretold of her, and she was the type of the most glorious things of all. This is yet more true of the church: she is founded in grace, but her pinnacles glow with glory. Men may glory in her without being braggarts, she has a lustre about her brow which none can rival. Whatever glorious things the saints may say of the church in their eulogies, they cannot exceed what prophets have foretold, what angels have sung, or what God himself has declared. Happy are the tongues which learn to occupy themselves with so excellent a subject, may they be found around our fire-sides, in our market-places, and in all the spots where men most congregate. Never let thy praises cease, O thou bride of Christ, thou fairest among women, thou in whom the Lord himself hath placed his delight, calling thee by that pearl of names, Hephzibah,—"for my delight is in her." Since the Lord has chosen thee, and deigns to dwell in thee, O thou city of beauty, none can rival thee, thou art the eye of the world, the pearl, the queen of all the cities of the universe; the true "eternal city," the metropolitan, the mother of us all. The years to come shall unveil thy beauties to the astonished eyes of all peoples, and the day of thy splendour shall come to its sevenfold noon.

"*Selah.*" With the prospect before him of a world converted, and the most implacable foes transformed into friends, it was meet that the psalmist should

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pause. How could he sing the glories of new-born Tyre and Ethiopia, received with open arms into union with Zion, until he had taken breath and prepared both voice and heart for so divine a song.

4. "*I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me.*" This shall be a glorious subject to speak of concerning Zion, that her old foes are new-born and have become her friends, worshipping in the temple of her God. Rahab or Egypt which oppressed Israel shall become a sister nation, and Babylon in which the tribes endured their second great captivity, shall become a fellow-worshipper; then shall there be mention made in familiar talk of the old enmities forgotten and the new friendships formed. Some consider that these are the words of God himself, and should be rendered "I will mention Rahab and Babylon as knowing me:" but we feel content with our common version, and attribute the words to the psalmist himself, who anticipates the conversion of the two great rival nations and speaks of it with exultation. "*Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia.*" These also are to bow before the Lord. Philistia shall renounce her ancient hate, Tyre shall not be swallowed up by thoughts of her commerce, and distant Ethiopia shall not be too far off to receive the salvation of the Lord. "*This man was born there.*" The word *man* is inserted by the translators to the marring of the sense, which is clear enough when the superfluous word is dropped,—"Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this was born there"—i.e., this nation has been born into Zion, regenerated into the church of God. Of the new births of nations we will make mention, for it is at once a great blessing and a great wonder. It is a glorious thing indeed when whole nations are born unto God.

> "Mark ye well Philistia's legions,
> Lo, to seek the Lord they came;
> And within the sacred regions
> Tyre and Cush have found a home."

Many understand the sense of these verses to be that all men are proud of their native country, and so also is the citizen of Zion, so that while of one it is said, "he was born in Egypt" and of another, "he came from Ethiopia," it would be equally to the honour of others that they were home-born sons of the city of God. The passage is not so clear that any one should become dogmatical as to its meaning, but we prefer the interpretation given above.

5. "*And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her.*" Not as nations only, but one by one, as individuals, the citizens of the New Jerusalem shall be counted, and their names publicly declared. Man by man will the Lord reckon them, for they are each one precious in his sight; the individual shall not be lost in the mass, but each one shall be of high account. What a patent of nobility is it, for a man to have it certified that he was born in Zion; the twice born are a royal priesthood, the true aristocracy, the imperial race of men. The original, by using the noblest word for man, intimates that many remarkable men will be born in the church, and indeed every man who is renewed in the image of Christ is an eminent personage, while there are some, who, even to the dim eyes of the world, shine forth with a lustre of character which cannot but be admitted to be unusual and admirable. The church has illustrious names of prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, reformers, missionaries and the like, which bear comparison with the grandest names honoured by the world, nay, in many respects far excel them. Zion has no reason to be ashamed of her sons, nor her sons of her. "Wisdom is justified of her children." "*And the highest himself shall establish her*"—the only establishment worth having. When the numbers of the faithful are increased by the new birth, the Lord proves himself to be the upbuilder of the church. The Lord alone deserves to wear the title of Defender of the Faith; he is the sole and sufficient Patron and Protector of the true church. There is no fear for the Lord's heritage, his own arm is sufficient to maintain his rights. The Highest is higher than all those who are against us, and the good old cause shall triumph over all.

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6. "*The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there.*" At the great census which the Lord himself shall take, he will number the nations without exception and make an exact registry of them, whether they were by their natural descent Babylonians or Tyrians, or other far-off heathen. May it be our happy lot to be numbered with the Lord's chosen both in life and death, in the church-roll below, and in the church-roll above. Jehovah's census of his chosen will differ much from ours; he will count many whom we should have disowned, and he will leave out many whom we should have reckoned. His registration is infallible. Let us pray then for that adoption and regeneration which will secure us a place among the heaven-born. It was thought to be a great honour to have one's name written in the golden book of the Republic of Venice, kings and princes paid dearly for the honour, but the book of life confers far rarer dignity upon all whose names are recorded therein.

7. In vision the psalmist sees the citizens of Zion rejoicing at some sacred festival, and marching in triumphant procession with vocal and instrumental music:—"*As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there.*" Where God is there must be joy, and where the church is increased by numerous conversions the joy becomes exuberant and finds cut ways of displaying itself. Singers and dancers, psalmists and pipers, united their efforts and made a joyful procession to the temple, inspired not by Bacchus, or by the Castalian fount, but by draughts from the sacred source of all good, of which they each one sing "*All my springs are in thee.*" Did the poet mean that henceforth he would find all his joys in Zion, or that to the Lord he would look for all inspiration, comfort, strength, joy, life and everything. The last is the truest doctrine. Churches have not such all-sufficiency within them that we can afford to look to them for all, but the Lord who founded the church is the eternal source of all our supplies, and looking to him we shall never flag or fail. How truly does all our experience lead us to look to the Lord by faith, and say "all my fresh springs are in thee." The springs of my faith and all my graces; the springs of my life and all my pleasures; the springs of my activity and all its right doings; the springs of my hope, and all its heavenly anticipations, all lie in thee, my Lord. Without thy Spirit I should be as a dry well, a mocking cistern, destitute of power to bless myself or others. O Lord, I am assured that I belong to the regenerate whose life is in thee, for I feel that I cannot live without thee; therefore, with all thy joyful people will I sing thy praises.

> "With joy shall sing the choral train,
> The minstrels breathe the answering strain:
> 'O Zion, Zion fair, I see
> The fountains of my bliss in thee.'"

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*A Psalm or Song for the Sons of Korah.*" The title prefixed is "A Psalm to be sung by the sons of Korah," i.e. of fallen man. Korah signifies the state in which trees are during winter, when stript of their verdure and fruit. In the same sense it is used for the bald head, when age or sickness has deprived it of its glory and left it without hair. This is a lively description of fallen man. He has lost his pristine beauty and fruitfulness. When he left God and turned to his own ways, he became like the trees of the field in winter, from which the genial warmth of the sun is withdrawn, or like the head, which by the abating of the natural heat and vigour is left naked and bald. But being brought to a right sense of this, and finding himself stript of all the glory which the first Adam had in paradise, he has been led to seek the restoration of his nature, and has obtained of the second Adam, the

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Lord from heaven, a much better state than he had lost. Every such person is entitled to sing this sacred hymn, and he is called upon to do it. The name of the person whom he is to celebrate is not mentioned at first, but is soon discovered by the character given of him.—*William Romaine.*

Whole Psalm.—Bishop Bruno entitles this Psalm, "The voice of prophecy concerning the heavenly Jerusalem," that is, the Church of Christ.

Verse 1.—"*His foundation is in the holy mountains.*" The foundation that God has given his city is in "the holy mountains." What are these holy mountains? What can they be but the eternal purpose of Jehovah—the purpose out of which the being of the Church and the whole dispensation of Divine love have sprung? What but those attributes of mercy, justice, holiness, and sovereignty, from the ineffable embrace and holy co-operation of which it comes to pass that his chosen people are redeemed? What but the promise of life that was given in Christ to the elect before the world began? What but the everlasting covenant, "ordered in all things and sure" from which grace and salvation proceed? What but these things, and Christ himself, the Rock of Ages, on which rock we know that the Church is so firmly founded, that the gates of hell cannot prevail against her? Yes, these are the holy mountains, whereon the city of God is built, and in which its deep and sure foundations are laid. The sure decree, the divine perfections, the promise of him that cannot lie, the oath and covenant of God, and the incarnate Son himself, are the holy mountains, the perpetual hills, whose summits are gloriously crowned by the city of the Great King. There the city sits securely, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.—*Andrew Gray.*

Verse 1.—"*Mountains.*" The situation of Jerusalem is in several respects singular amongst the cities of Palestine. Its elevation is remarkable, occasioned, not from its being on the summit of one of the numerous hills of Judæa, like most of the towns and villages, but because it is on the edge of one of the highest table-lands of the country. Hebron, indeed, is higher still, by some hundred feet; and from the south, accordingly, the approach to Jerusalem is by a slight descent. But from every other side, the ascent is perpetual; and, to the traveller approaching Jerusalem from the west or east, it must always have presented the appearance, beyond any other capital of the then known world—we may add, beyond any important city that has ever existed on the earth—of a mountain city; breathing, as compared with the sultry plains of the Jordan or of the coast, a mountain air; enthroned, as compared with Jericho or Damascus, Gaza or Tyre, on a mountain fastness. In this respect it concentrated in itself the character of the whole country of which it was to be the capital—the "mountain throne," the "mountain sanctuary," of God. "The 'mount' of God is as the 'mount' of Bashan; an high mount as the mount of Bashan. Why leap ye so, ye high 'mountains'? this is the 'mountain' which God desireth to dwell in". . . . It was emphatically the lair of the lion of Judah, of "Ariel," the Lion of God. "In Judah is God known; his name is great in Israel. In Salem is his 'leafy covert,' and his 'rocky den' in Zion. . . . Thou art more glorious and excellent than the 'mountains of the robbers'". And this wild and fastness-like character of Jerusalem was concentrated yet again in the fortress, the "stronghold" of Zion. That point, the highest in the city, the height which most readily catches the eye from every quarter, is emphatically the "hill fort," the "rocky hold" of Jerusalem—the refuge where first the Jebusite, and then the Lion of God, stood at bay against the hunters.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley.*

Verses 1, 2.—If we suppose the psalm to have been composed in the days of Hezekiah, it will appear quite intelligible that the Psalmist should break out so suddenly at the beginning with praise of the *security* of Sion: he merely lends his mouth in this case to the full heart of the people; "*The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob,*" is seen in its true light, for

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this preference for Sion was at that time *verified*—its gates remained closed upon the enemies, while all the rest of the country was subject to their sway.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 2.—"*The Lord loveth the gates,*" etc. The gates of a walled city give access to it and power over it, and are therefore naturally here put for the whole. The Hebrew participle (*loving*) implies constant and habitual attachment.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 2.—"*The Lord loveth the gates of Zion.*" Because of the going out and coming in of the people of God. Thus indeed the disposition of lovers is shown, that they are filled with a remarkable affection of love towards those places through which those whom they love frequently pass, as doors and gates, and those ways which they daily traverse. What other reason could God have for loving the gates of Zion?—*Musculus.*

Verse 2.—"*The gates of Zion*" are the doctrines of the Gospel, "*the tabernacles of Jacob*" are the teachings of the law, the law was accomplished in the gospel; therefore it is said that "the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."—"*Plain Commentary,*" 1859.

Verse 2.—"*The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more,*" etc. No doubt the prayers which the faithful put up to heaven from under their private roofs were very acceptable unto him; but if a saint's single voice in prayer be so sweet to God's ear, much more the church choir, his saints' prayers in concert together. A father is glad to see any one of his children, and makes him welcome when he visits him, but much more when they come together; the greatest feast is when they all meet at his house. The public praises of the church are the emblem of heaven itself, where all the angels make but one concert.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 2.—"*The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all,*" etc. It is here assumed that the Lord loves the dwellings of Jacob—he loves those that are true Israelites. These are succeeded by the name *Christian*, for the Christian Church is now become the true Israel of God. He loves his saints on account of that image of himself which they bear; he loves them on account of those graces which are infused into them when they are renewed by the Spirit; he loves them on account of the relation they stand in to him as his people, and as his church, who are qualified for the duties of the relation by that love of their Father, that reliance upon his care, that delight in his person, that enjoyment in his service, which belongs to dutiful and affectionate children. He loves them because they imitate his perfections in some humble measure—because they receive the word of his mouth—because they are ready to obey every call of his providence, setting themselves in the paths of his testimony wherever he may direct—because they yield themselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and their bodies as instruments of righteousness, no longer walking after the deeds of the flesh, but after the will of God. He takes a delight in them; the Lord delighteth in the righteous; he knoweth their way; he loves, approves, and confirms them. The most common occupations of life—the honest industry of the servants of God, is looked upon by him with approbation. By these they show forth their Father, and the praises of him who called them from darkness to light. The most ordinary duties of our calling become sacrifices to God, and religious duties, when performed in the Spirit, and directed to the great end of glorifying God. He looks with peculiar complacency on the dwellings of his people on account of those domestic devotional acknowledgments of his majesty which are there maintained, when the head walks before his family as a priest to offer praise and thanksgiving; this attracts peculiar approbation and delight. He loves to see his people training up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and their children walking after them in the paths of that obedience which he has enjoined. He delights to see the course of purity which runs in Christian families. He loves to see the progress which the younger parts of religious families make in piety, while

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they grow in grace, and in favour with God and man. He looks down with peculiar delight on such circles as these: there he deigns his presence, and bestows peculiar blessings. However obscure the dwellings of Jacob may be, to him they are open and manifest at all times; and whether in cottages or in palaces, his eye rests there with complacency; and he says of such places, "Here will I dwell for ever and ever." Prayer and devotion sanctify every family, and diffuse a spirit of piety through all the avocations of life, so that we need not retire from the world, but are rather called to show forth the virtues of the Christian life in it.

But it is said, that, although "he loves the dwellings of Jacob," yet "*he loves the gates of Zion more* than all the dwellings of Jacob"—that nothing in the dwellings of Jacob so much attracts his attention as the people of God connected together in a spiritual capacity. I. In the first place, the Divine Being regards with peculiar complacency the worship of his saints on its own account. II. On account of that union of mind and consent of heart, evinced in the assembling of God's people together, and constituting themselves into a church. III. Because of the testimony which the church bears toward the truth. IV. Upon account of that deference to his authority, which is evinced by maintaining and keeping up the practice of those institutes which rest entirely on that authority. V. By making the assembly of the saints the grand means of conversion. VI. That peculiar presence of God is generally vouchsafed to his saints, and made manifest to them, although it be hidden from the world, which induces the conviction that God is present of a truth. VII. The Divine Being shows his preference of the gates of Zion to the dwellings of Jacob, by continually maintaining in operation those gifts which are for the edification of the saints, and without which the union of the saints would be with difficulty maintained. VIII. The Divine Being shews his preference to Zion by that marvellous protection which is afforded to the interests of the church of God; whereby, though weak, and frequently reduced to a handful of disciples, yet they have been protected, and their society on earth continued.—*Robert Hall.*

Verse 2.—Some absent themselves from public worship, under pretence that they can serve the Lord at home as well in private. How many are apt to say, they see not but their time may be as well spent at home, in praying, reading some good book, or discoursing on some profitable subject, as in the use of ordinances in public assemblies! They see not but private prayer may be as good to them as public, or private reading and opening the Scripture as profitable as public preaching; they say of their private duties, as Naaman of the waters of Damascus, 2 Kings v. 12: May I not serve the Lord as acceptably, with as much advantage, in private exercises of religion? May I not wash in these and be clean? They see not the great blessings God has annexed to public worship more than to private. Oh, but if it be thus, if one be as good as the other, what means the Lord to prefer one before the other? To what purpose did the Lord choose the gates of Zion, to place his name there, if he might have been worshipped as well in the dwellings of Jacob? How do men of this conceit run counter to the Lord? He prefers the gates of Zion, not only before one or some, but before all the dwellings of Jacob; and they prefer one such dwelling before the gates of Zion.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 3.—"*Glorious things are spoken*" of the people of God. Take the church for a visible congregation, a mixed congregation; glorious things are spoken of that. It is the house of God. Take it as visible, 'the vessels of honour and dishonour,' 2 Tim. ii. 20, and the field, the 'tares and the wheat,' Matt. xiii. 1. etc., it is God's field. Though we take the church as visible, it hath a glorious name for the good that is in it, especially for the wheat. But take the church of God for the company of his children that are gathered by the means of grace, dwelling in the visible church, enjoying the ordinances: so they are the house and temple of Christ, 'the temple of the Holy Ghost, the body of Christ, the spouse of Christ.' They are God's delight, they are spiritual kings

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and priests, etc. The most glorious things that can be, all other excellencies in the world. are but titular things, mere shadows of things. There is some little reality in earthly things, but it is nothing in comparison, it is scarce worth the name of reality, but Solomon calls them "vanity of vanities." In comparison of the excellencies of the church all is nothing. I might be large in these particulars. It is enough to give you the generals of the delights and excellencies of God's house, "the beauty of the Lord."—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 3.—"*The glories of the wilderness are in thee.*" The Schechinah, which appeared upon Sinai, and marshalled the army of the Israelites upon their journey through the wilderness, has now fixed its residence in thee, O city of God. Compare Ps. lxviii. 17.—*Samuel Horsley*

Verse 4.—"*I will make mention,*" etc. As if he had said, I do not deny the due praises which belong to other places and countries, but rather am wont to make honorable mention of them among my acquaintance; and to allow that "*this man,*" that is, some notable person, though comparatively of no great value, was born in them.—*Thomas Fenton.*

Verse 4.—"*Rahab,*" a poetical name of *Egypt.* The same word signifies "fierceness, insolence, pride;" if Hebrew when applied to Egypt, it would indicate the national character of the inhabitants.—*Smith's Dictionary of the Bible.*

Verse 4.—It should comfort the church that God is able to make her chiefest enemies to become converts, and that he hath done it sundry times, and will yet do it more; and that he can take order with those enemies which shall not be converted, as he did with *Rahab* and *Babylon;* for, "*I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me,*" signifieth a mention-making of them; *viz.*, to the edification of the church's children, both concerning what God had done in those nations in justice; and what he would do to them in mercy, or unto other enemies like unto them.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—"*Rahab,*" "*Babylon,*" "*Philistia,*" "*Tyre,*" "*Ethiopia.*" This is the glory of the Church, that into her the fulness of the nations shall enter,—the proud from Egypt, who for her haughtiness is called Rahab,—the worldly from Babylon, the city of confusion,—the wrathful from Philistia, so long the enemies of Israel,—the covetous from Tyre, the rich city of the traders,—and the slaves of ignorance from Cush, and from the land of Ham,—all these shall learn the love of Christ and confess his truth, and shall enter into that all-glorious city, and be admitted and acknowledged as citizens of the celestial Sion.—"*Plain Commentary.*"

Verse 4.—By this testimony of the nations here mentioned, we may understand the testimony of the Gentile Christians in general, though, perhaps, a special reference is had to that extraordinary scene which took place at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost: "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilæans? And how hear we every man in his own tongue, wherein we were born?" Acts ii. 5—8.

The reader will find that there is a remarkable agreement between the nations specified in the book of the Acts, and the nations pointed out in the psalm before us. Rahab, that is, Egypt, is first mentioned; and in the Acts we find enumerated, "Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene;" next Babylon is in the record; and the Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia," were inhabitants of what once was the Babylonian empire: Philistia is also mentioned; and "dwellers in Judea" are spoken of in the Acts—"dwellers in Judea" speaking a different language from what was common at Jerusalem. Who could these be, so probably, as the inhabitants of the ancient Philistia, which was in the precincts of the allotment of Judah? Here, too, perhaps, on account of its port of Joppa, was a grand resort of "Cretes and Arabians," and "strangers of Rome."

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The Grecian settlements of Asia Minor are the only ones specified in the Acts of the Apostles, which we have not noticed in the Psalm—"Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia:" but what could so probably indicate these countries, and all who spoke the dialects of the Grecian tongue, as the great mart of Tyre, in frequenting which, the Jews would have the most frequent opportunity of intercourse with these nations?—*John Fry.*

Verse 4.—"*Born in her.*" *The* Missionary Society set forth in the Prophets, by our Lord and by his apostles, is, the Church; and so, whereas our natural state, after Adam's fall, was alienation from God, and disunion among ourselves, would He restore "glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good-will towards men," by binding us up in one holy fellowship, and making the continuance of his blessings dependent upon that unity, which he imparted and preserves. To adduce the whole proof for this, would be to go through the whole Old Testament; for the Old Testament is direct prophecy and type, is one large prophecy of the Redeemer and his Kingdom or Church. No sooner had disunion multiplied with the multiplying of men, but in the second generation from Adam, he formed union through a Church, and "Men began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen. iv. 26), *i. e.*, they began to unite in worshipping the Lord, and amid the growing corruption, religion was no longer entrusted to the insulated care of single families, but concentrated in a church. And when, after the flood, one righteous man was called out of the fast-corrupting world, unity was preserved, in that one only was called, but in that one a church was founded; for this was the reason assigned by God himself: "All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord," (Gen. xviii. 18, 19). "God called Abraham *alone*, and blessed him, and increased him" (Isai. li. 2), and formed the Jewish Church out of him, that however largely it might spread, it might be bound in one by its origin of one; and he gave it also outward marks and signs between him and it, which by severing it from others, might keep it one in itself. The temporal people had their union through a temporal birth of one, and outward signs; the Christian Church has its unity by a spiritual birth, and inward graces, through the power deposited in her to give spiritual birth, so that through one mother, we are all born of one Father, God, and amongst ourselves are brethren, by being members of One, our ever-blessed Lord.

The unity of the Christian Church and her office of gathering all nations unto the Lord, are set forth, in many ways, in prophecy. Thus, in our Psalm, Zion is set forth as the special object of God's love, as having (in language which anticipates the Gospel) been "founded" by him "on the holy mountains," as the "city of God," whereof "glorious things are spoken." And what are these? That she should be the spiritual birthplace of all nations. It is not merely said, as in other places, that they should "come to her," should "flow into her," but that they should be "born in her." "Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man (*i. e.* all, one by one) was born in her;" and whence? all the nations of the earth, Rahab or Egypt, Babylon, Tyre, Ethiopia, Philistia, the most learned, the most powerful, the wealthiest, the furthest, and her nearest, oldest and bitterest enemy Philistia, all, being already born after the flesh, as Egyptians, Babylonians, Ethiopians, Tyrians, Philistines, should be "born in her," and by being "born there," should become children of God, citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, written by God in the roll of his book. "The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there;" he shall account them as his, being re-born in his Church.

In like manner, with regard to every prophecy, whereat men's hearts beat, as an encouragement to Missionary labours. Throughout, it is the Lord and Saviour of the Church, or the Church itself, filled with his Spirit, and restored and enlarged, and widening herself by his favour, and gathering his people into herself, his fold.—*E. B. Pusey, in a Sermon entitled,* "*The Church the Converter of the Heathen.*" 1838.

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Verses 4—6.—It is made the honour and dignity of Sion, that is, of the true Church of God, to have such and such born in it: "*this and that man* was born in *her*." There are two things signified in this expression, as branches of their honour; the one is the *quality* of the persons; and the other is the *number* of them. For the *quality* of them, "*this*;" for the *number* of them, "*this and that*." To have both of these born in Sion, persons of *note and eminency*, and a *multitude and plurality* of such persons; this is a part of that dignity and renown which belongs unto it. . . .

And so for the noun, "*man*;" the Hebrew word אִישׁ which is here used for a man, except qualified by some other word as joined with it, signifies a man of *worth*, not a common or ordinary person. The Church brings forth such as these, אַנְשֵׁי הַשֵּׁם, men of renown, famous and eminent men, and that in all kinds of perfections, whether natural, or civil, or spiritual; men of parts, or men of power, or men of piety. There are those in all these excellencies which have been and still are born in her.

First, take it for *natural* or *acquired* abilities; men of parts, and knowledge, and wisdom, and improved understandings; the church is not without these: "*this man*," *i.e.*, this *learned* man, or this *wise* man was born in Sion. All are not idiots who are Christians; no, but there are some of very rare and admirable accomplishments in all kinds and pieces of learning and secular knowledge, which are graciously qualified. There's Paul with his parchments, and Peter with his fisher's net. So also secondly, take it for civil or secular qualifications; men of dignity, and power, and estate: "*this man*," *i.e.*, this *honourable* man, נָשׂוּא פָנִים, eminent in countenance, as he is called, Isaiah iii. 2, *he* is likewise born in Sion; the mighty man, and the man of war. The Syriac interpreter was so far sensible of this, as that he expresses it in the very text; and therefore instead of saying, "*This* man was born there," he says, "*A potent man* was born there, 'and *he* has established it;'" whereby (as I conceive), he takes in the word "*highest*," which follows afterwards in the verse, and refers it here to this place . . . . . And again, the Chaldee paraphrast in the text, "*This King* was born there," understanding thereby Solomon, as most conceive and apprehend it.

Thirdly, take it for *spirituals*, and for these accomplishments especially; "*This man*," *i.e.*, this *godly* man; this is that which is most proper and essential to Sion, and to the being born in it; yea, it is that which *makes Sion* itself, in the sense we now take it. It is the highest perfection of it, and the greatest commendation to it of any thing else. This is the great honour of the church, that it forms men to such qualities and dispositions as those are, which no other place does beside . . . . . As for other places, they may perhaps now and then reach to some *other principles*, and those likewise very glorious in the eyes of the *world*—morality, and civility, and ingenuity, and smoothness of behaviour. The school of nature and common reason may sometimes come up to these, and that in a very great measure; yea, but now go a little higher, to brokenness of heart, to self-denial, to love of enemies, to closing with Christ, the frame and spirit of the gospel; this is to be found nowhere but only *in Sion*. And here it is: "*This man* was born *there*."

"*Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there*." Here's the excellency of the ordinances, and that power and energy which is stirring in the Church of Christ; that it is able to work such a miraculous alteration *as this*; to bring men from darkness to light, from Satan to God, from a state of sin and corruption and unregeneracy, to a state of grace and holiness and regeneration; yea, from the lowest degree of the one to the highest degree of the other. That *Philistia* should turn into *Palestina*, *Tyre* into *Jerusalem*, *Ethiopia* into *Judea*; here's the wonder of all; the reconciling of these two opposite terms thus both together. That "princes should come out of *Egypt*," and that *Ethiopia* should stretch out her hands to God, as it is in Ps. lxviii. 31; that the blackamoor should change his skin, and that the leopard should change his spots; and that this Ethiopian should become this

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Christian; that he which was born *there*, should be born *here*."—*Thomas Horton, in "Zion's Birth-Register unfolded in a Sermon to the native citizens of London."* 1656.

Verses 4—6.—Foreign nations are here described not as captives or tributaries, not even as doing voluntary homage to the greatness and glory of Zion, but as actually incorporated and enrolled, by a new birth, among her sons. Even the worst enemies of their race, the tyrants and oppressors of the Jews, Egypt and Babylon, are threatened with no curse, no shout of joy is raised at the prospect of their overthrow, but the privileges of citizenship are extended to them, and they are welcomed as brothers. Nay more, God himself receives each one as a child newly-born into his family, acknowledges each as his son, and enrols him with his own hand on the sacred register of his children. It is the mode of anticipating a future union and brotherhood of all the nations of the earth, not by conquest, but by incorporation into one state, and by a birthright so acquired, which is so remarkable. In some of the prophets, more especially in Isaiah, we observe the same liberal, conciliatory, comprehensive language towards foreign states, as Tyre and Ethiopia, and still more strikingly toward Egypt and Assyria (chap. xix. 22—25). But the psalm stands alone amongst the writings of the Old Testament, in representing this union of nations as a new birth unto the city of God . . . . It is the first announcement of that great amity of nations, or rather of that universal common citizenship of which heathen philosophers dreamt, which was "in the mind of Socrates when he called himself a citizen of the world," which had become a common-place of Stoic philosophy, which Judaism tried finally to realize by the admission of proselytes, through baptism, into the Jewish community; which Rome accomplished, so far as the external semblance went, first by subduing the nations, and then by admitting them to the rights of Roman citizenship. But the true fulfilment of this hope is to be found only in that kingdom which Christ has set up. He has gathered into his commonwealth all the kingdoms of the earth. He has made men one, members of the same family, by teaching them to feel that they are all children of the same Father. He has made it evident that the hope of the Jewish singer is no false hope; that there is a Father in heaven who cares for all, whatever name they bear. Thus the psalm has received a better and higher fulfilment than that which lies on the surface of its words. It was fulfilled in Christ.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verses 4—7.—The main thought is that contained in ver. 4—7, the glorifying of Sion by the reception of the heathen into the number of its citizens; and a well-defined form and arrangement of this thought forms the proper kernel of the Psalm, viz., "Sion, the *birth-place* of the nations," which occurs in every one of the three verses (4—6), which are bounded by a Selah behind and before.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 5.—"*This man.*" The word rendered "*Man*" is generally used for a person of eminence; and the clause "this and that man," is simply, "a Man and a Man," which some think is used as a peculiar superlative, and means, *the most eminent of men*, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and they suppose that He, in his divine nature, is "*the Highest*" who "*shall establish the church.*" No doubt he is the glory of the church, and of his people Israel; but his crucifixion was the deepest disgrace imaginable to Jerusalem itself.—*Thomas Scott.*

Verse 5.—"*This man.*" It is well to observe that the word for "*man*," used here, is not אָדָם *adam*, the common name for man, but אִישׁ *ish*, which is usually employed when a name is introduced to be designated with distinction and honour. There are in Hebrew, in fact, three words to designate man, with varied signification—אָדָם *adam*, the common name; אִישׁ *ish*, the name of excellency and honour; and אֱנוֹשׁ *enosh*, man in his weak and inferior character, as liable to misfortune, misery, and death. The illustrative discrimination with which these words are respectively employed, gives to many passages of the Hebrew Scriptures a force and significance which cannot be preserved in

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translation into a language which has but one word to represent all these meanings—or indeed has no word for man but the one answering to *Adam*, unless indeed our "male," in a sense of dignity and strength, answers in some measure to *ish*.—*John Kitto, in "The Pictorial Bible."*

Verse 6.—The Lord will "*count*" (יִסְפֹּר) *record it in a book*, when "*he writes up the people*" (בִּכְתוֹב עַמִּים) *registers the several nations* of the earth; that "*this man was born in*" Sion. The psalmist here describes the peculiar regard of God to the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, and figuratively represents him, as keeping a register of all the nations of the earth, and marking, as it were, in that register every one that was a citizen of *Jerusalem*, as thereby entitled to his distinguishing favour and protection.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 6.—"*This man was born there.*" When events shall be traced to their principles at the last day, many a scene will come forth into prominence, which now is of little regard. Humble churches will then prove to have been the birthplace, and stately palaces the graves of many an immortal soul, while every saved soul will ascribe its springs of glory to its Redeemer, through the instrumentality of that church, which he has ordained.—*Edward Garrard Marsh.*

6.—"*Selah.*" The Hebrew text addeth "*Selah*," which St. Jerome translateth *semper* (always). For the Church, as a bride glorious in her husband, shall evermore be preached of; glorious things shall be spoken of her, and in her shall be continually sung the ineffable glory of the everlasting grace of God in Christ our Lord. And so the Jews for the most part interpret the word "*Selah*" by "*everlasting.*" This is evident in their epitaphs, even as the Jewish epitaph is in Hebrew at Basle—"His soul continues in Paradise, Amen, Amen, Amen, for ever and ever."—*Urbanus Regius* [*? Le Roi*] (—1541) *in* "*The Solace of Sion.*"

7.—"*The singers;*" "*the players on instruments.*" Song and music were prominent features of Divine worship in David's time. This is evident from the large number of two hundred and eighty-eight Levites who were expressly appointed for singing and the performance of music. Not less than two hundred and fifty-five singing men and singing women returned from the exile . . . The chief instruments used by the Levites were, according to the records of the Books of Chronicles, cymbals, harps, and lutes: according to Psalm v. (title), we should add the flute, which is frequently noticed on Egyptian monuments.—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 7.—(*First clause*). *For all its inhabitants are expert musicians;* lit. *sing like flute-players.* The Hebrews seem to have surpassed all nations in the skill of poetry and music; and every citizen could sing and dance. This pre-eminence the Psalmist seems to hint at.—*Alexander Geddes.*

Verse 7.—"*All my springs are in thee.*" The original word מַעְיָנַי, which we render "*springs*," is used in a figurative sense, to denote *any one's posterity.* Thus Proverbs v. 16, "Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad"; *i.e.*, thy posterity be exceeding numerous. And thus in the place before us: the inhabitants of Jerusalem should triumph and sing, "*All my springs*," or fountains, all my friends, my family, my children, are in thee, are thy citizens, enjoy the glorious privileges thou art favoured with, are all inserted in God's register, and entitled to his protection and favour. Thus there is a harmony and connection between all the parts of this ode, which I think is very intelligible and poetical.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 7.—"*All my springs are in thee.*" Whatever conduit pipe be used, Christ is the fountain and foundation of every drop of comfort; Christ is the God of all true consolation. It is not in the power of all the angels of heaven to give any soul one drop of comfort, nor can all on earth give you one dram of comfort. They can speak the words of comfort, but they cannot cause the soul to receive comfort. God comforts by them, 2 Cor. vii. 6. Titus was but an instrument. Comforting is called frequently in Scripture the speaking to the

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heart, Hos. ii. 14. Who is able to speak to the heart but he who is the Lord and commander of the heart? God hath put all the oil of spiritual joy into the hands of Christ, Isa. lxi. 3, and none but he can give it out. He that wants comfort must go to Christ, he that hath received any true comfort must ascribe it to Christ. "*All my springs*," saith the Church, "are in thee."—*Ralph Robinson.*

Verse 7.—The silver springs of grace, and the golden springs of glory are in him.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 7.—"*Springs.*" The meaning of this verse is obscure, partly from its abrupt brevity, and partly from the ambiguity of one word. The word "*springs*" is, beyond all controversy, to be here taken metaphorically; but interpreters are not agreed as to the explanation of the metaphor. Some understand it as denoting *hopes*, some *affections*, and others *thoughts*. Did the idiom of the language admit, I would willingly subscribe to the opinion of those who translate it *melodies* or *songs*. But as this might be considered unsupported by the usage of the Hebrew term, I am rather inclined to adopt, as most suitable to the subject in hand, the opinion that *lookings* is the proper translation, the root of the word signifying *an eye*. It is as if the psalmist had said, I will always be earnestly looking, as it were, with fixed eyes upon thee.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 7.—"*My springs.*"

Whether songs or melodies
In Thee are all my well-springs.

This passage is given obscurely in most of the versions; it is here rendered strictly, and, as the author hopes, perspicuously. As the Greeks had their Pierian springs, their fountains of Aganippe dedicated to the Muses, Jerusalem had, in like manner, her sacred springs, her fountains of inspiration, in a much higher degree. It is to these the holy bard alludes in the passage before us, as Milton does in the following, who has perhaps copied from the present in his address to the "Heavenly Muse":

"Or if Zion's hill
Delight thee more, or *Siloa's fount that flowed*
Hard by the oracle of God, I thence
Invoke thine aid to my adventurous song."

—*John Mason Good.*

Verse 7.—"*All my springs.*" Fitly may we here quote the delightful hymn of Robert Robinson which has puzzled so many, but which has in it a fine classical allusion to Hippocrene and Mount Parnassus.

"Come, thou fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace,
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above:
Praise the mount—oh fix me on it,
Mount of God's unchanging love."

—*C. H. S.*

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HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verses 2, 3.—I. The foundation of Zion. 1. It is but one: "foundation." 2. It is the Lord's: "his." 3. It is in conformity with holiness: "holy mountains." 4. It consists of eternal purposes. 5. It is built up on immutable principles. 6. It is situated in a glorious position. II. The favour enjoyed by Zion. 1. God "loves the dwellings of Jacob." He led, fed, guarded, lighted, visited them. 2. He loves Zion "better"; and gives all those blessings in a richer form. 3. There are more to love. 4. Their occupations are more spiritual. 5. Their songs and worship are more enthusiastic. 6. Their testimony is more powerful. 7. Their knowledge of truth is more clear. 8. Their fellowship is on a scale more heavenly. Let us be in the Church, and love her. III. The fame of Zion. "Glorious things are spoken," 1, *of* her in history; 2, *in* her by ministry; 3, *for* her by Jesus; 4, *about* her in prophecy. Here is a fruitful theme.

Verse 3.—The idea of the text presents the Church as "the city of God": let us touch upon some of the "glorious things" that are spoken of it. I. There are glorious things with respect to the *erection* of the city. 1. There is the plan of its erection. There was never a plan so faultless, so complete, so wonderful for its beauty and grandeur. The gates, the walls, the buildings, the streets, the monuments, the fountains, the gardens, unite to proclaim it a masterpiece of skill. The Architect was he who built the skies. 2. There is the *site* where the city is erected. See verse 1. 3. There is the *date* of the city's erection. A halo and a glory attach, in a case like this, to great antiquity. Now it is long since the city was built. It was standing in the days of Paul. "Ye are come unto the city of the living God." Heb. xii. 22. David was well acquainted with it. Ps. xlvi. 4. It was standing before the flood. Noah, Enoch, Abel, dwelt in it. It is almost as old as the creation. II. There are glorious things to tell of the *defences* of the city. It has been besieged ever since it was a city at all, and it is not taken to this hour. "We have a strong city," etc. III. There are glorious things in connexion with the *stores* and *supplies* on which the city depends; 1, their excellence; 2, their abundance; 3, their source. IV. There are glorious things respecting the *King* of the city; his name, person, character, etc. V. There are glorious things in connexion with the *citizens* of the day.—*Andrew Gray*, 1805—1861.

Verse 3.—I. Observe, that a city is not like a flower, a tree, or a plant—something that grows out of the earth, and is nourished from the earth, and dependent wholly on its juices. It is an artificial thing, constructed by wisdom and raised by power, as it was designed by genius and forethought. II. A city upon earth is surrounded generally by walls. III. Jerusalem (the most celebrated of cities, from which this figure is obviously drawn) was built upon the brow of a hill, an extremely conspicuous and beautiful object. IV. In a city there are various buildings, and structures of various shapes, materials and value: illustrate by the different denominations, &c. V. A city has municipal laws. VI. It has also trade, traffic, &c. VI. The figure, as applied to the Church of Christ, involves the idea of safety or security, honour, &c. VII. There is also the idea of fewness.—*John Cumming*, 1843.

Verse 3.—The things "spoken" of the city of God. I. It shall be the permanent and the peculiar residence of God. II. It shall be the scene of delightful privileges and blessings. III. It shall be invested with absolute and inviolable security. IV. It shall possess renown and empire throughout the whole world. V. Its institutions and existence shall be perfected in the celestial state.—*James Parsons*, 1839.

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—I. Behold what the "man" was: a native of "Philistia," a heathen, and an enemy to God. II. Behold what happened to him: he

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"was born there," *i.e.* new born in Zion. III. Behold what he became—he became by his new birth a freeman and burgess of Zion, &c.

Verses 4, 5.—I. What is not the most honourable birth-place—not Rahab nor Egypt, nor Babylon, nor any earthly palace or kingdom. II. What is? "Of Zion," &c. 1. Because it is a nobler birth; a being born again of the Spirit of God. 2. Because it is a nobler place; the residence of the Highest, and established for ever. 3. Because it brings nobler rank and privileges.—*G. R.*

Verses 4—7.—I. Zion shall produce many good and great men. II. Zion's interest shall be established by divine power. III. Zion's sons shall be registered with honour. IV. Zion's songs shall be sung with joy and triumph.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 4—7.—I. The excellence of the church is here stated. II. Her enlargement is here promised.—*J. Scholefield*, 1825.

Verse 5.—The renowned men of the church of God. 1. Great warriors, who have fought with temptation. 2. Great poets, whose lives were psalms. 3. Great heroes, who have lived and died for Jesus. 4. Great kings, who have ruled themselves, &c. Apostles, martyrs, confessors, reformers, men renowned for virtues such as only grace can produce.

Verse 5.—"*This and that man.*" The individuality of true religion. 1. Each soul sins for itself. 2. Rejects or accepts the Saviour for itself. 3. Must be judged, and 4. Saved or lost individually. The consequent need of personal piety; the temptations to neglect it; and the habits which promote it.

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—The Established Church of God—her Head, her protection, her power, &c.

Verse 6.—I. "The Lord" will make the Census. II. He will "count" whether a man be rightly there or no. III. Every man truly born in Zion shall be admitted on the register.

Verse 6.—I. The time referred to. "When he writeth up," &c.; when all the true Israel is saved. II. The account to be taken: "When he writeth up," &c., *i.e.* revises and re-enters the names in the Lamb's Book of Life. Compares the called with the chosen. III. The test to be applied. 1. Their being in Zion, or having the means of grace. 2. Their being born there. IV. The completion of their number: "The Lord shall count." An exact number of stones in a perfect building and of members in a perfect body. So in Christ's Church. All make one bride. V. The notice taken of each one: "This man was born there." Men fell as a whole; they are saved individually.—*G. R.*

Verse 7.—I. In God our joy. II. From God our supplies. III. To God our praise.

Verse 7 (*last clause*).—All the springs within me, all the springs which flow for me, are in my God. There are "upper and nether springs," springs "shut up," "valley" springs (Ps. civ. 10), rock springs, &c.; but all these flow from the Lord.

WORKS UPON THE EIGHTY-SEVENTH PSALM.

In "*Sermons preached before the University of Oxford* . . . by John Eveleigh, D.D., 1815," is "*Sermon XII., in which is proposed a New Interpretation of the LXXXVIIth Psalm.*"

The Solace of Sion, and Joy of Jerusalem. Or consolation of God's Church in the latter age, redeemed by the preaching of the Gospel vniversallye. Being a godly and learned exposition of the LXXXVII Psalme of the Princelye Prophet David: Written in Latine by the reverend Doctor Urbanus Regius, Pastor of Christes Church at Zelle, in Saxonie 1536. Translated into English by R. Robinson, Citizen of London, 1587.

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PSALM LXXXVIII.

TITLE.—A Song or Psalm for the sons of Korah. *This sad complaint reads very little like a* Song, *nor can we conceive how it could be called by a name which denotes a song of praise or triumph; yet perhaps it was intentionally so called to show how faith "glories in tribulations also." Assuredly, if ever there was a song of sorrow and a psalm of sadness, this is one. The sons of Korah, who had often united in chanting jubilant odes, are now bidden to take charge of this mournful dirge-like hymn. Servants and singers must not be choosers.* To the chief Musician. *He must superintend the singers and see that they do their duty well, for holy sorrow ought to be expressed with quite as much care as the most joyful praise; nothing should be slovenly in the Lord's house. It is more difficult to express sorrow fitly than it is to pour forth notes of gladness.* Upon Mahalath Leannoth. *This is translated by Alexander,* "concerning afflictive sickness," *and if this be correct, it indicates the mental malady which occasioned this plaintive song.* Maschil. *This term has occurred many times before, and the reader will remember that it indicates an instructive or didactic psalm:—the sorrows of one saint are lessons to others; experimental teaching is exceedingly valuable.* Of Heman the Ezrahite. *This, probably, informs us as to its authorship; it was written by Heman, but which Heman it would not be easy to determine, though it will not be a very serious mistake if we suppose it to be the man alluded to in* 1 *Kings* iv. 31, *as the brother of Ethan, and one of the five sons of Zerah* (1 *Chron.* ii. 6), *the son of Judah, and hence called "the Ezrahite:" if this be the man, he was famous for his wisdom, and his being in Egypt during the time of Pharaoh's oppression may help to account for the deep bass of his song, and for the antique form of many of the expressions, which are more after the manner of Job than David. There was, however, a Heman in David's day who was one of the grand trio of chief musicians, "Heman, Asaph, and Ethan"* (1 *Chron.* xv. 19), *and no one can prove that this was not the composer. The point is of no consequence; whoever wrote the psalm must have been a man of deep experience, who had done business on the great waters of soul trouble.*

SUBJECT AND DIVISIONS.—*This psalm is fragmentary, and the only division of any service to us would be that suggested by Albert Barnes, viz.—A description of the sick man's sufferings* (*verses* 1—9), *and a prayer for mercy and deliverance* (10—18). *We shall, however, consider each verse separately, and so exhibit the better the incoherence of the author's grief. The reader had better first peruse the psalm as a whole.*

EXPOSITION.

O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day *and* night before thee:

2 Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry;

3 For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.

4 I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man *that hath* no strength:

5 Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand.

6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.

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7 Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted *me* with all thy waves. Selah.

8 Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them: *I am* shut up, and I cannot come forth.

9 Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee.

10 Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise *and* praise thee? Selah.

11 Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? *or* thy faithfulness in destruction?

12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

13 But unto thee have I cried, O LORD; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.

14 LORD, why castest thou off my soul? *why* hidest thou thy face from me?

15 I *am* afflicted and ready to die from *my* youth up: *while* I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.

16 Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off.

17 They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together.

18 Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, *and* mine acquaintance into darkness.

1. "*O Lord God of my salvation.*" This is a hopeful title by which to address the Lord, and it has about it the only ray of comfortable light which shines throughout the psalm. The writer has salvation, he is sure of that, and God is the sole author of it. While a man can see God as his Saviour, it is not altogether midnight with him. While the living God can be spoken of as the life of our salvation, our hope will not quite expire. It is one of the characteristics of true faith that she turns to Jehovah, the saving God, when all other confidences have proved liars unto her. "*I have cried day and night before thee.*" His distress had not blown out the sparks of his prayer, but quickened them into a greater ardency, till they burned perpetually like a furnace at full blast. His prayer was personal—whoever had not prayed, he had done so; it was intensely earnest, so that it was correctly described as a cry, such as children utter to move the pity of their parents; and it was unceasing, neither the business of the day nor the weariness of the night had silenced it: surely such entreaties could not be in vain. Perhaps, if Heman's pain had not been incessant his supplications might have been intermittent; it is a good thing that sickness will not let us rest if we spend our restlessness in prayer. Day and night are both suitable to prayer; it is no work of darkness, therefore let us go with Daniel and pray when men can see us; yet, since supplication needs no light, let us accompany Jacob and wrestle at Jabbok till the day breaketh. Evil is transformed to good when it drives us to prayer. One expression of the text is worthy of special note; "*before thee*" is a remarkable intimation that the Psalmist's cries had an aim and a direction towards the Lord, and were not the mere clamours of nature, but the groanings of a gracious heart towards Jehovah, the God of salvation. Of what use are arrows shot into the air?

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The archer's business is to look well at the mark he drives at. Prayers must be directed to heaven with earnest care. So thought Heman—his cries were all meant for the heart of his God. He had no eye to onlookers as Pharisees have, but all his prayers were before his God.

2. "*Let my prayer come before thee.*" Admit it to an audience; let it speak with thee. Though it be *my* prayer, and therefore very imperfect, yet deny it not *thy* gracious consideration. "*Incline thine ear unto my cry.*" It is not music save to the ear of mercy, yet be not vexed with its discord, though it be but a cry, for it is the most natural expression of my soul's anguish. When my heart speaks, let thine ear hear. There may be obstacles which impede the upward flight of our prayers—let us entreat the Lord to remove them; and as there may also be offences which prevent the Lord from giving favourable regard to our requests—let us implore him to put these out of the way. He who has prayed day and night cannot bear to lose all his labour. Only those who are indifferent in prayer will be indifferent about the issue of prayer.

3. "*For my soul is full of troubles.*" I am satiated and nauseated with them. Like a vessel full to the brim with vinegar, my heart is filled up with adversity till it can hold no more. He had his house full and his hands full of sorrow; but, worse than that, he had his heart full of it. Trouble in the soul is the soul of trouble. A little soul trouble is painful; what must it be to be sated with it? And how much worse still to have your prayers return empty when your soul remains full of grief. "*And my life draweth nigh unto the grave.*" He felt as if he must die, indeed he thought himself half dead already. All his life was going, his spiritual life declined, his mental life decayed, his bodily life flickered; he was nearer dead than alive. Some of us can enter into this experience, for many a time have we traversed this valley of death-shade, ay and dwelt in it by the month together. Really to die and be with Christ will be a gala day's enjoyment compared with our misery when a worse than physical death has cast its dreadful shadow over us. Death would be welcomed as a relief by those whose depressed spirits make their existence a living death. Are good men ever permitted to suffer thus? Indeed they are; and some of them are even all their life-time subject to bondage. O Lord, be pleased to set free thy prisoners of hope! Let none of thy mourners imagine that a strange thing has happened unto him, but rather rejoice as he sees the footprints of brethren who have trodden this desert before.

4. "*I am counted with them that go down into the pit.*" My weakness is so great that both by myself and others I am considered as good as dead. If those about me have not ordered my coffin they have at least conversed about my sepulchre, discussed my estate, and reckoned their share of it. Many a man has been buried before he was dead, and the only mourning over him has been because he refused to fulfil the greedy expectations of his hypocritical relatives by going down to the pit at once. It has come to this with some afflicted believers, that their hungry heirs think they have lived too long. "*I am as a man that hath no strength.*" I have but the name to live; my constitution is broken up; I can scarce crawl about my sick room, my mind is even weaker than my body, and my faith weakest of all. The sons and daughters of sorrow will need but little explanation of these sentences, they are to such tried ones as household words.

5. "*Free among the dead.*" Unbound from all that links a man with life, familiar with death's door, a freeman of the city of the sepulchre, I seem no more one of earth's drudges, but begin to anticipate the rest of the tomb. It is a sad case when our only hope lies in the direction of death, our only liberty of spirit amid the congenial horrors of corruption. "*Like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more.*" He felt as if he were as utterly forgotten as those whose carcasses are left to rot on the battle-field. As when a soldier, mortally wounded, bleeds unheeded amid the heaps of slain, and remains to his last expiring groan unpitied and unsuccoured, so did Heman sigh out his soul in loneliest sorrow, feeling as if even God himself had quite

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forgotten him. How low the spirits of good and brave men will sometimes sink. Under the influence of certain disorders everything will wear a sombre aspect, and the heart will dive into the profoundest deeps of misery. It is all very well for those who are in robust health and full of spirits to blame those whose lives are sicklied o'er with the pale cast of melancholy, but the evil is as real as a gaping wound, and all the more hard to bear because it lies so much in the region of the soul that to the inexperienced it appears to be a mere matter of fancy and diseased imagination. Reader, never ridicule the nervous and hypochondriacal, their pain is real; though much of the evil lies in the imagination, it is not imaginary. "*And they are cut off from thy hand.*" Poor Heman felt as if God himself had put him away, smitten him and laid him among the corpses of those executed by divine justice. He mourned that the hand of the Lord had gone out against him, and that he was divided from the great author of his life. This is the essence of wormwood. Man's blows are trifles, but God's smitings are terrible to a gracious heart. To feel utterly forsaken of the Lord and cast away as though hopelessly corrupt is the very climax of heart-desolation.

6. "*Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.*" What a collection of forcible metaphors, each one expressive of the utmost grief. Heman compared his forlorn condition to an imprisonment in a subterranean dungeon, to confinement in the realms of the dead, and to a plunge into the abyss. None of the similes are strained. The mind can descend far lower than the body, for it there are bottomless pits. The flesh can bear only a certain number of wounds and no more, but the soul can bleed in ten thousand ways, and die over and over again each hour. It is grievous to the good man to see the Lord whom he loves laying him in the sepulchre of despondency; piling nightshade upon him, putting out all his candles, and heaping over him solid masses of sorrow; evil from so good a hand seems evil indeed, and yet if faith could but be allowed to speak she would remind the depressed spirit that it is better to fall into the hand of the Lord than into the hands of man, and moreover she would tell the despondent heart that God never placed a Joseph in a pit without drawing him up again to fill a throne; that he never caused a horror of great darkness to fall upon an Abraham without revealing his covenant to him; and never cast even a Jonah into the deeps without preparing the means to land him safely on dry land. Alas, when under deep depression the mind forgets all this, and is only conscious of its unutterable misery; the man sees the lion but not the honey in its carcass, he feels the thorns but he cannot smell the roses which adorn them. He who now feebly expounds these words knows within himself more than he would care or dare to tell of the abysses of inward anguish. He has sailed round the Cape of Storms, and has drifted along by the dreary headlands of despair. He has groaned out with one of old—"My bones are pierced in me in the night season; and my sinews take no rest. I go mourning without the sun. Terrors are turned upon me, they pursue my soul as the wind." Those who know this bitterness by experience will sympathise, but from others it would be idle to expect pity, nor would their pity be worth the having if it could be obtained. It is an unspeakable consolation that our Lord Jesus knows this experience, right well, having, with the exception of the sin of it, felt it all and more than all in Gethsemane when he was exceeding sorrowful even unto death.

7. "*Thy wrath lieth hard upon me.*" Dreadful plight this, the worst in which a man can be found. Wrath is heavy in itself; God's wrath is crushing beyond conception, and when that presses hard the soul is oppressed indeed. The wrath of God is the very hell of hell, and when it weighs upon the conscience a man feels a torment such as only that of damned spirits can exceed. Joy or peace, or even numbness of indifference, there can be none to one who is loaded with this most tremendous of burdens. "*And thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves,*" or *all thy breakers.* He pictures God's wrath as breaking over him like those waves of the sea which swell, and rage, and dash with fury upon

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the shore. How could his frail barque hope to survive those cruel breakers, white like the hungry teeth of death. Seas of affliction seemed to rush in upon him with all the force of omnipotence; he felt himself to be oppressed and afflicted like Israel in Egypt, when they cried by reason of their afflictions. It appeared impossible for him to suffer more, he had exhausted the methods of adversity and endured *all* its waves. So have we imagined, and yet it is not really quite so bad. The worst case might be worse, there are alleviations to every woe; God has other and more terrible waves which, if he chose to let them forth, would sweep us into the infernal abyss, whence hope has long since been banished.

"*Selah.*" There was need to rest. Above the breakers the swimmer lifts his head and looks around him, breathing for a moment, until the next wave comes. Even lamentation must have its pauses. Nights are broken up into watches, and even so mourning has its intervals. Such sorrowful music is a great strain both on voices and instruments, and it is well to give the singers the relief of silence for a while.

8. "*Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me.*" If ever we need friends it is in the dreary hour of despondency and the weary time of bodily sickness; therefore does the sufferer complain because divine providence had removed his friends. Perhaps his disease was infectious or defiling, so that he was legally separated from his fellow men, perhaps their fears kept them away from his plague-stricken house, or else his good name had become so injured that they naturally avoided him. Most friends require but small excuse for turning their backs on the afflicted. The swallows offer no apology for leaving us to winter by ourselves. Yet it is a piercing pain which arises from the desertion of dear associates; it is a wound which festers and refuses to be healed. "*Thou hast made me an abomination unto them.*" They turned from him as though he had become loathsome and contaminating, and this because of something which the Lord had done to him; therefore, he brings his complaint to the prime mover in his trouble. He who is still flattered by the companions of his pleasure can little guess the wretchedness which will be his portion should he become poor, or slanderously accused, for then one by one the parasites of his prosperity will go their way and leave him to his fate, not without cutting remarks on their part to increase his misery. Men have not so much power to bless by friendship as to curse by treachery. Earth's poisons are more deadly than her medicines are healing. The mass of men who gather around a man and flatter him are like tame leopards; when they lick his hand it is well for him to remember that with equal gusto they would drink his blood. "Cursed is he that trusteth in man." "*I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.*" He was a prisoner in his room, and felt like a leper in the lazarretto, or a condemned criminal in his cell. His mind, too, was bound as with fetters of iron; he felt no liberty of hope, he could take no flights of joy. When God shuts friends out, and shuts us in to pine away alone, it is no wonder if we water our couch with tears.

9. "*Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction.*" He wept his eyes out. He exhausted the lachrymal glands, he wore away the sight itself. Tears in showers are a blessing, and work our good; but in floods they become destructive and injurious. "LORD, *I have called daily upon thee.*" His tears wetted his prayers, but did not damp their fervour. He prayed still, though no answer came to dry his eyes. Nothing can make a true believer cease praying; it is a part of his nature, and pray he must. "*I have stretched out my hands unto thee.*" He used the appropriate posture of a supplicant, of his own accord; men need no posture-maker, or master of the ceremonies, when they are eagerly pleading for mercy, nature suggests to them attitudes both natural and correct. As a little child stretches out its hands to its mother while it cries, so did this afflicted child of God. He prayed all over, his eyes wept, his voice cried, his hands were outstretched, and his heart broke. This was prayer indeed.

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10. "*Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?*" Wherefore then suffer me to die? While I live thou canst in me display the glories of thy grace, but when I have passed into the unknown land, how canst thou illustrate in me thy love? If I perish thou wilt lose a worshipper who both reverenced, and in his own experience illustrated, the wonders of thy character and acts. This is good pleading, and therefore he repeats it. "*Shall the dead arise and praise thee?*" He is thinking only of the present, and not of the last great day, and he urges that the Lord would have one the less to praise him among the sons of men. Shades take no part in the quires of the Sabbath, ghosts sing no joyous psalms, sepulchres and vaults send forth no notes of thanksgiving. True the souls of departed saints render glory to God, but the dejected Psalmist's thoughts do not mount to heaven but survey the gloomy grave: he stays on this side of eternity, where in the grave he sees no wonders and hears no songs.

"*Selah.*" At the mouth of the tomb he sits down to meditate, and then returns to his theme.

11. "*Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave?*" Thy tender goodness—who shall testify concerning it in that cold abode where the worm and corruption hold their riot? The living may indite "editations among the Tombs," but the dead know nothing, and therefore can declare nothing. "*Or thy faithfulness in destruction?*" If the Lord suffered his servant to die before the divine promise was fulfilled, it would be quite impossible for his faithfulness to be proclaimed. The poet is dealing with this life only, and looking at the matter from the point of view afforded by time and the present race of men; if a believer were deserted and permitted to die in despair, there could come no voice from his grave to inform mankind that the Lord had rectified his wrongs and relieved him of his trials, no songs would leap up from the cold sod to hymn the truth and goodness of the Lord; but as far as men are concerned, a voice which loved to magnify the grace of God would be silenced, and a loving witness for the Lord removed from the sphere of testimony.

12. "*Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?*" If not here permitted to prove their goodness of Jehovah, how could the singer do so in the land of darkness and death shade? Could his tongue, when turned into a clod, charm the dull cold ear of death? Is not a living dog better than a dead lion, and a living believer of more value to the cause of God on earth than all the departed put together? "*And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?*" What shall be told concerning thee in the regions of oblivion? Where memory and love are lost, and men are alike unknowing and unknown, forgetful and forgotten, what witness to the divine holiness can be borne? The whole argument amounts to this—if the believer dies unblest, how will God's honour be preserved? Who will bear witness to his truth and righteousness?

13. "*But unto thee have I cried, O* LORD;" I have continued to pray for help to thee, O Jehovah, the living God, even though thou hast so long delayed to answer. A true-born child of God may be known by his continuing to cry; a hypocrite is great at a spurt, but the genuine believer holds on till he wins his suit. "*And in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.*" He meant to plead on yet, and to increase his earnestness. He intended to be up betimes, to anticipate the day-light, and begin to pray before the sun was up. If the Lord is pleased to delay, he has a right to do as he wills, but we must not therefore become tardy in supplication. If we count the Lord slack concerning his promise we must only be the more eager to outrun him, lest sinful sloth on our part should hinder the blessing.

"Let prayer and holy hymn
  Perfume the morning air;
Before the world with smoke is dim
  Bestir thy soul to prayer.

While flowers are wet with dew
  Lament thy sins with tears,
And ere the sun shines forth anew
  Tell to thy Lord thy fears."

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14. "LORD, *why castest thou off my soul?*" Hast thou not aforetime chosen me, wilt thou now reject me? Shall thine elect ones become thy reprobates? Dost thou, like changeable men, give a writing of divorcement to those whom thy love has espoused? Can thy beloveds become thy cast-offs? "*Why hidest thou thy face from me?*" Wilt thou not so much as look upon me? Canst thou not afford me a solitary smile? Why this severity to one who has in brighter days basked in the light of thy favour? We may put these questions to the Lord, nay, we ought to do so. It is not undue familiarity, but holy boldness. It may help us to remove the evil which provokes the Lord to jealousy, if we seriously beg him to shew us wherefore he contends with us. He cannot act towards us in other than a right and gracious manner, therefore for every stroke of his rod there is a sufficient reason in the judgment of his loving heart; let us try to learn that reason and profit by it.

15. "*I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up.*" His affliction had now lasted so long that he could hardly remember when it commenced; it seemed to him as if he had been at death's door ever since he was a child. This was no doubt an exaggeration of a depressed spirit, and yet perhaps Heman may have been born under the cypress, and have been all his days afflicted with some chronic disease or bodily infirmity; there are holy men and women whose lives are a long apprenticeship to patience, and these deserve both our sympathy and our reverence,—our reverence we have ventured to say, for since the Saviour became the acquaintance of grief, sorrow has become honourable in believers' eyes. A life-long sickness may by divine grace prove to be a life-long blessing. Better suffer from childhood to old age than to be let alone to find pleasure in sin.

"*While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.*" Long use had not blunted the edge of sorrow, God's terrors had not lost their terror; rather had they become more overwhelming and had driven the man to despair. He was unable to collect his thoughts, he was so tossed about that he could not judge and weigh his own condition in a calm and rational manner. Sickness alone will thus distract the mind; and when a sense of divine anger is added thereto, it is not to be wondered at if reason finds it hard to hold the reins. How near akin to madness soul-depression sometimes may be, it is not our province to decide; but we speak what we do know when we say that a feather-weight might be sufficient to turn the scale at times. Thank God O ye tempted ones who yet retain your reason! Thank him that the devil himself cannot add that feather while the Lord stands by to adjust all things. Even though we have grazed upon the rock of utter distraction, we bless the infinitely gracious Steersman that the vessel is seaworthy yet, and answers to her helm: tempest-tost from the hour of her launch even to this hour, yet she mounts the waves and defies the hurricane.

16. "*Thy fierce wrath goeth over me.*" What an expression, "fierce wrath," and it is a man of God who feels it! Do we seek an explanation? It seemed so to him, but "things are not what they seem." No punitive anger ever falls upon the saved one, for Jesus shields him from it all; but a father's anger may fall upon his dearest child, none the less but all the more, because he loves it. Since Jesus bore my guilt as my substitute, my Judge cannot punish me, but my Father can and will correct me. In this sense the Father may even manifest "fierce wrath" to his erring child, and under a sense of it that dear broken-down one may be laid in the dust and covered with wretchedness, and yet for all that he may be accepted and beloved of the Lord all the while. Heman represents God's wrath as breaking over him as waves over a wreck. "*Thy terrors have cut me off.*" They have made me a marked man, they have made me feel like a leper separated from the congregation of thy people, and they have caused others to look upon me as no better than dead. Blessed be God this is the sufferer's idea and not the very truth, for the Lord will neither cast off nor cut off his people, but will visit his mourners with choice refreshments.

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17. "*They came round about me daily like water.*" My troubles, and thy chastisements poured in upon me, penetrating everywhere, and drowning all. Such is the permeating and pervading power of spiritual distress, there is no shutting it out; it soaks into the soul like the dew into Gideon's fleece; it sucks the spirit down as the quicksand swallows the ship; it overwhelms it as the deluge submerged the green earth. "*They compassed me about together.*" Griefs hemmed him in. He was like the deer in the hunt, when the dogs are all around and at his throat. Poor soul! and yet he was a man greatly beloved of heaven!

18. "*Lover and friend hast thou put far from me.*" Even when they are near me bodily, they are so unable to swim with me in such deep waters, that they stand like men far away on the shore while I am buffeted with the billows; but, alas, they shun me, the dearest lover of all is afraid of such a distracted one, and those who took counsel with me avoid me now! The Lord Jesus knew the meaning of this in all its wormwood and gall when in his passion. In dreadful loneliness he trod the wine-press, and all his garments were distained with the red blood of those sour grapes. Lonely sorrow falls to the lot of not a few; let them not repine, but enter herein into close communion with that dearest lover and friend who is never far from his tried ones. "*And mine acquaintance into darkness,*" or better still, *my acquaintance is darkness.* I am familiar only with sadness, all else has vanished. I am a child crying alone in the dark. Will the heavenly Father leave his child there? Here he breaks off, and anything more from us would only spoil the abruptness of the unexpected FINIS.

[*We have not attempted to interpret this Psalm concerning our Lord, but we fully believe that where the members are, the Head is to be seen pre-eminently. To have given a double exposition under each verse would have been difficult and confusing; we have therefore left the Messianic references to be pointed out in the* Notes, *where, if God the Holy Ghost be pleased to illustrate the page, we have gathered up more than enough to lead each devout reader to behold Jesus, the man of sorrows and the acquaintance of grief.*]

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*Mahalath Leannoth.*" I lean to the idea, that the words *Mahalath Leannoth*, are intended to denote some musical instrument of the plaintive order, and in this opinion KIMCHI and other Jewish writers perfectly agree. They assert that it was a wind-instrument, answering very much to the flute, and employed mainly in giving utterance to sentiments of grief, upon occasions of great sorrow and lamentation. With this view of the title, I should look for no new translation, but should just read it substantially as our translators here: "A Song or Psalm for the sons of Korah, to the giver of victory, upon Mahalath Leannoth, an instruction for Heman, the Ezrahite.—*John Morison.*

Title.—"*Leannoth*" is variously rendered, according as it is derived from עָנָה, *anah, to suffer, be afflicted*, or from עָנָה, *anah, to chant, sing.* Gesenius, De Wette, Dr. Davies, and others take the latter view; while Mudge, Hengtenberg, Alexander, and others take the former. Mudge translates, *to create dejection;* Alexander renders, *mahalath leannoth, concerning afflictive sickness;* Hengstenberg reads, *upon the distress of oppression.* The Septuagint (ἀποκριθῆναι) and the Vulgate (*respondendum*) indicate a *responsive* song, and Houbigant translates the words in question, *for the choirs, that they may answer.* Many etymologists consider the primary idea of עָנָה, *anah, to sing*, that of

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answering. The tone of the psalm in question, however, being decidedly that of *sadness and dejection*, it appears more probable that *leannoth* denotes the strictly elegiac character of the performance, and the whole title may read therefore, "*A Song or Psalm, for the sons of Korah, to the chief musician, upon the flutes* [*or the hollow instruments,*] *to afflict* [*or cause dejection,*] *a didactic Psalm of Heman, the Ezrahite.*"—*F. G. Hibbard, in "The Psalms chronologically arranged, with Historical Introductions." New York*, 1856.

Title.—The explanation :—to be performed mournfully with subdued voice, agrees with the mournful contents, whose tone is even more gloomy than that of Ps. lxxvii.—*From "The Psalms, by C. B. Moll."* [*Lange's Series of Commentaries.*]

Title.—Heman." 1. David was not the only man acquainted with sad exercise and affliction of spirit, for here is another, to wit, *Heman the Ezrahite*, as deep in trouble of spirit as he or any other beside. 2. They are not all men of weak minds and shallow wit who are acquainted with trouble of spirit, and borne down with the sense of God's wrath ; for here is *Heman*, one amongst the wisest of all Israel, (and inferior to none for wisdom, except to Solomon alone), under the heaviest exercise we can imagine possible for a saint. 3. When it pleaseth God to exercise a man of parts, of great gifts and graces, he can make his burden proportionable to his strength, and give him as much to do with the difficulties he puts him to, as a weaker man shall find in his exercise, as appeareth in the experience of *Heman.* 4. Wise men in their trouble must take the same course with the simpler sort of men ; that is, they must run to God as others do, and seek relief only in his grace, who as he distributeth the measures of trouble, can also give comfort, ease, and deliverance from them, as the practice of *Heman* doth teach us. 5. What trouble of wounded spirit some of God's children have felt in former times, others dear to God may find the like in after ages, and all men ought to prepare for the like, and should not think the exercise strange when it cometh, but must comfort themselves in this, that other saints whose names are recorded in Scripture, have been under like affliction ; for the psalm is appointed "to give instruction" ; it is "*Maschil of Heman.*" 6. What is at one time matter of mourning to one of God's children, may become matter of joy and singing afterward, both to himself and to others, as this sad anguish of spirit in *Heman* is made a song of joy unto God's glory, and the comfort of all afflicted souls, labouring under the sense of sin and felt wrath of God, unto the world's end ; it is "*A Song, a Psalm for the sons of Korah.*" 7. Such as are most heartily afflicted in spirit, and do flee to God for reconciliation and consolation through Christ, have no reason to suspect themselves, that they are not esteemed of and loved as dear children, because they feel so much of God's wrath : for here is a saint who hath drunken of that cup, (as deep as any who shall read this Psalm,) here is one so much loved and honoured of God, as to be a penman of Holy Scripture, and a pattern of faith and patience unto others ; even *Heman the Ezrahite.—David Dickson.*

Whole Psalm.—"We have in this psalm the voice of our suffering Redeemer," says Horne ; and the contents may be thus briefly stated—

1. *The plaintive wailing* of the suffering one, verses 1, 2. It strongly resembles Psa. xxii. 1, 2.

2. *His soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*, verses 3, 4, 5. The word "*free*" in our version, is חָפְשִׁי, properly denoting separation from others, and here rendered by Junius and Tremellius, "set aside from intercourse and communication with men, having nothing in common with them, like those who are afflicted with leprosy, and are sent away to separate dwellings." They quote 2 Chron. xxvi. 21.

3. *His feelings of hell*, verses 6, 7. For he feels God's prison, and the gloom of God's darkest wrath. And "*Selah*" gives time to ponder.

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4. *His feelings of shame and helplessness*, verse 8. "His own receive him not."

5. *The effects of soul-agony upon his body*, verse 9.

6. *His submission to the Lord*, verse 9. It is the very tone of Gethsemane, "Nevertheless, *not my will!*"

7. *The sustaining hope of resurrection*, verses 10 (with a solemn pause, "*Selah*"), 11, 12. The "*land of forgetfulness*," and "*the dark*," express the unseen world, which, to those on this side of the vail, is so unknown, and where those who enter it are to us as if they had for ever been forgotten by those they left behind. God's wonders shall be made known there. There shall be victory gained over death and the grave: God's "*lovingkindness*" to man, and his "*faithfulness*," pledge him to do this new thing in the universe. Messiah must return from the abodes of the invisible state; and in due time, Heman, as well as all other members of the Messiah's body, must return also. Yes, God's *wonders* shall be known at the grave's mouth. God's *righteousness*, in giving what satisfied justice in behalf of Messiah's members, has been manifested gloriously, so that resurrection must follow, and the land of forgetfulness must give up its dead. O morning of surpassing bliss, hasten on! Messiah has risen; when shall all that are his arise? Till that day dawn, they must take up their Head's plaintive expostulations, and remind their God in Heman's strains of what he has yet to accomplish. "*Wilt thou show wonders to the dead*," etc.

8. *His perseverance in vehement prayer*, verses 13, 14.

9. *His long-continued and manifold woes*, verses 15, 16, 17.

10. *His loneliness of soul*, verse 18. Hengstenberg renders the last clause of this verse more literally—"The dark kingdom of the dead is instead of all my companions." What unutterable gloom! completed by this last dark shade—all sympathy from every quarter totally withdrawn! Forlorn indeed! Sinking from gloom to gloom, from one deep to another, and every billow sweeping over him, and wrath, like a tremendous mountain, "*leaning*" or resting its weight on the crushed worm. Not even Psalm xxii. is more awfully solemnising, there being in this deeply melancholy psalm only one cheering glimpse through the intense gloom, namely, that of resurrection hoped for, but still at a distance. At such a price was salvation purchased by him who is the resurrection and the life. He himself wrestled for life and resurrection in our name—and that price so paid is the reason why to us salvation is free. And so we hear in solemn joy the harp of Judah struck by Heman, to overawe our souls not with his own sorrows, but with what Horsley calls "The lamentation of Messiah," or yet more fully, *The sorrowful days and nights of the Man of Sorrows.*—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm.—This psalm stands alone in all the Psalter for the unrelieved gloom, the hopeless sorrow of its tone. Even the very saddest of the others, and the Lamentations themselves, admit some variations of key, some strains of hopefulness; here only all is darkness to the close.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Whole Psalm.—The prophecy in the foregoing psalm of the conversion of all nations is followed by this Passion-Psalm, in order that it may never be forgotten that God has purchased to himself an universal church, by the precious blood of his dear Son.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—All the misery and sorrow which are described in this Psalm, says Brentius, have been the lot of Christ's people. We may therefore take the psalm, he adds, to be common to Christ and his church.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 1.—"*My.*" That little word "*my*" opens for a moment a space between the clouds through which the Sun of righteousness casts one solitary beam. Generally speaking, you will find that when the psalm begins with lamentation, it ends with praise; like the sun, which, rising in clouds and mist, sets brightly, and darts forth its parting rays just before it goes down. But here the first gleam shoots across the sky just as the sun rises, and no sooner

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has the ray appeared, than thick clouds and darkness gather over it; the sun continues its course throughout the whole day enveloped in clouds; and sets at last in a thicker bank of them than it ever had around it during the day. "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." In what a dark cloud does the sun of Heman set!—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 1.—"*Before thee.*" He had not recklessly poured forth his complaints, or cast them to the winds, as many are wont to do, who have no hope in their calamities; but he had always mingled with his complaining prayers for obtaining deliverance, and had directed them to God, where faith assured him his prayers would be seen again. This must be attentively noted, since herein is seen of what kind the complaints of the saints are.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 1.—"*Before thee.*" Other men seek some hiding place where they may murmur against God, but the psalmist comes into the Lord's presence and states his grievances. When a man dares to pour out his complaint before the Lord's own face, his woes are real, and not the result of petulence or a rebellious spirit.—*C. H. S.*

Verses 1, 2.—"*Before thee.*" Not seeking to be seen by human eye, but by God alone, therefore, "*let my prayer come before thee,*" that is, let it be acceptable before thee, after the similitude of ambassadors who are admitted to audience; and when my prayer has entered "*incline thine ear unto my cry,*" because thou hearest the desire of the afflicted—*Richardus Hampolus.*

Verse 2.—"*Incline thine ear,*" etc. It is necessary that God should incline his ear unto our prayer, else it would be in vain to come before Him. The prodigal did not venture to present his prayer before the father ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him. For then he said, Luke xv. 21, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight," etc., and so he obtained mercy. Esther did not present her prayer to Ahasuerus before he descended from his throne and inclined himself to her. Esth. v. 2, etc.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 3.—"*My soul is full of troubles.*" The Lord Jesus emptied himself of glory, that he might be full of trouble. His soul, which was free from human sin, was full of human troubles, that we who are full of sin might be free from trouble; his life drew nigh to the terrors of the unseen world, that we might not be its spoil and prey.—"*Plain Commentary.*"

Verse 3.—"*My soul is full of troubles.*" Hear into what a depth of spiritual distress three worthy servants of God in these later times were plunged and pressed down under the sense of God's anger for sin. Blessed *Mistress Brettergh* upon her last bed was horribly hemmed in with the sorrows of death; the very grief of hell laid hold upon her soul; a roaring wilderness of woe was within her, as she confessed of herself. She said, her sin had made her a prey to Satan; and wished that she had never been born, or that she had been made any other creature rather than a woman. She cried out many times, woe, woe, woe, etc.; a weak, a woful, a wretched, a forsaken woman; with tears continually trickling from her eyes. *Master Peacock*, that man of God, in that his dreadful visitation and desertion, recounting some smaller sins, burst out in these words: "And for these," saith he, "I feel now a hell in my conscience." Upon other occasions he cried out, groaning most pitifully, "Oh me, wretch! Oh mine heart is miserable! Oh, oh, miserable and woful! The burden of my sin lieth so heavy upon me, I doubt it will break my heart. Oh how woful and miserable is my state that I am hunted by hell-hounds!" When by-standers asked if he would pray, he answered, "I cannot." Suffer us, say they, to pray for you. "Take not," replied he, "the name of God in vain, by praying for a reprobate."

What grievous pangs, what sorrowful torments, what boiling heats of the fire of hell that blessed saint of God, *John Glover*, felt inwardly in his spirit, saith Foxe, no speech outwardly is able to express. Being young, saith he, I

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remember I was once or twice with him, whom partly by his talk I perceived, and partly by mine own eyes saw to be so worn and consumed by the space of five years, that neither almost any brooking of meat, quietness of sleep, pleasure of life, yea, and almost no kind of senses was left in him. Upon apprehension of some backsliding, he was so perplexed, that if he had been in the deepest pit of hell, he could almost have despaired no more of his salvation; in which intolerable griefs of mind, saith he, although he neither had, nor could have any joy of his meat, yet was he compelled to eat against his appetite, to the end to defer the time of his damnation so long as he might; thinking with himself, but that he must needs be thrown into hell, the breath being once out of his body. I dare not pass out of this point, lest some child of God should be here discouraged, before I tell you that every one of these three was at length blessedly recovered, and did rise most gloriously out of their several depths of extremest spiritual misery, before their end.

Hear, therefore, *Mistress Brettergh's* triumphant songs and ravishments of spirit, after the return of her well beloved: "O Lord Jesus, dost thou pray for me? O blessed and sweet Saviour, how wonderful! How wonderful are thy mercies! Oh thy love is unspeakable, thou hast dealt so graciously with me! O my Lord and my God, blessed be thy name for evermore, which hast shewed me the path of life. Thou didst, O Lord, hide thy face from me for a little season, but with everlasting mercy thou hast had compassion on me. And now, blessed Lord, thy comfortable presence is come; yea, Lord, thou hast had respect unto thine handmaid, and art come with fulness of joy, and abundance of consolation. O blessed be thy name, my Lord and my God. O the joys that I feel in my soul! They be wonderful. O Father, how merciful and marvellously gracious art thou unto me! yea, Lord, I feel thy mercy and I am assured of thy love; and so certain am I thereof, as Thou art the God of truth, even so sure do I know myself to be thine, O Lord my God, and this my soul knoweth right well. Blessed be the Lord that hath thus comforted me, and hath brought me now to a place more sweet unto me than the garden of Eden. Oh the joy, the delightsome joy that I feel! O praise the Lord for his mercies, and for this joy which my soul feeleth full well; praise his name for evermore.

Hear with what heavenly calmness and sweet comforts *Master Peacock's* heart was refreshed and ravished when the storm was over: "Truly, my heart and soul," saith he, (when the tempest was something allayed) "have been far led and deeply troubled with temptations, and stings of conscience, but I thank God they are eased in good measure. Wherefore I desire that I be not branded with the note of a cast-away or reprobate. Such questions, oppositions, and all tending thereto, I renounce. Concerning mine inconsiderate speeches in my temptation, I humbly and heartily ask mercy of God for them all." Afterward by little, and little, more light did arise in his heart, and he brake out into such speeches as these: "I do, God be praised, feel such comfort from that, what shall I call it?" "Agony," said one that stood by. "Nay," quoth he, "that is too little; that had I five hundred worlds, I could not make satisfaction for such an issue. Oh, the sea is not more full of water, nor the sun of light, than the Lord of mercy; yea, his mercies are ten thousand times more. What great cause have I to magnify the great goodness of God, that hath humbled such a wretched miscreant, and of so base condition, to an estate so glorious and stately. The Lord hath honoured me with his goodness! I am sure he hath provided a glorious kingdom for me. The joy that I feel in mine heart is incredible." For the third, (namely, *John Glover*) hear Mr. Foxe: "Though this good servant of God suffered many years so sharp temptations, and strong buffetings of Satan; yet the Lord, who graciously preserved him all the while, not only at last did rid him out of all discomfort, but also framed him thereby to such mortification of life, as the like lightly hath not been seen; in such sort, as he being like one placed in heaven already, and dead in this world both in word and meditation, led a life altogether celestial, abhorring in

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his mind all profane doings—*Robert Bolton* (1572—1631); *in* "*Instructions for a right Comforting afflicted Consciences.*"

Verse 3.—"*My life.*" The Hebrew word rendered *life* is in the plural number, as in Gen. ii. 7; iii. 14, 17; vi. 17; vii. 15; *et al.* *Why* the plural was used as applicable to life cannot now be known with certainty. It *may* have been to accord with the fact, that man has *two* kinds of life;—the animal life,—or life in common with the inferior creation; and intellectual, or higher life,—the life of the *soul.* The meaning here is, that he was about to die; or that his *life* or *lives* approached that state when the grave closes over us; the extinction of the mere animal life; and the separation of the soul—the immortal part—from the body.—*Albert Barnes.*

3. "*The grave.*" The word which is rendered "*hell*" in the Prayer Book translation, and "*the grave*" in the Bible version, and which is usually translated either as *hell* or *the grave*, is in the Hebrew שְׁאוֹל and in the Greek "*Hades.*" "*Hades*" signifies "the unseen world." The word "*Sheol*" is literally "the Devouring, or the Insatiable." (Compare Hab. ii. 5,) "who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied;" and also Prov. xxx. 15, 16.) "*Sheol*" seems to have presented itself to the thoughts of the ancient Hebrews as a gloomy, silent, inevitable, and mysterious abode, situated within the earth, whither the souls of the departed were compelled to repair and to dwell, upon their being separated from the body. (Isa. xiv. 9—20). They believed that the spirits of all human kind were contained there in a state of waiting, and there especially dwelt the souls of the giants before the flood (1 Pet. iii. 19, 20,) and of the great ones of old, the *Rephaim*, whom they pictured to themselves as fearful and gigantic spectres (Compare Prov. ii. 18). These ideas became modified and developed with the increasing clearness of divine teaching; and they divided the abode of the dead into different states of hope and comfort, which they called Abraham's bosom and paradise (Luke xvi. 22, 23; xxiii. 43); and of misery and suffering, (Wisdom iii. 1). Life and immortality were brought to light by the Saviour, and also judgment and Hell—the *Gehenna* of everlasting punishment, as distinguished from the Unseen World. (Compare Rev. xx. 13, 14). From these speculations of Jewish Rabbis respecting *Sheol* the church of Rome appears to have developed the doctrine of Purgatory. It should be added that it was a received opinion among the followers of Rabbinical teaching, that all of the seed of Abraham, though they would be dwellers in *Sheol* before the general resurrection, would finally escape the *Gehenna* of everlasting fire. The rich man (Luke xvi. 23) is in Hades in torments when he calls to Abraham his father.—"*Plain Commentary.*"

Verse 4.—"*I am counted with them that go down into the pit.*" Not only myself, says he, but others also now despair of my life, and number me with those whose corpses are borne forth to burial. For now all my powers have failed and my vital spirits become quenched. He uses the word גֶּבֶר which indicates fortitude rather than אָדָם or אִישׁ in order to show how great the severity of these evils was, and the vehemence of his griefs, which had broken even a most robust man.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 4.—"*I am counted with them that go down into the pit.*" Next to the troubles of Christ's soul, are mentioned the disgrace and ignominy to which he submitted: He who was the fountain of immortality, from whom no one could take his life, who could in a moment have commanded twelve legions of angels to his aid, or have caused heaven and earth, at a word speaking, to fly away before him, he was *counted among them that go down into the pit;* he died, to all appearance, like the rest of mankind, nay, he was forcibly put to death, as a malefactor; and seemed, in the hands of his executioners, *as a man that had no strength*, no power, or might, to help and save himself. His strength went from him; he became weak, and like another man. The people shook their heads at him, saying, "He saved others, himself he cannot save."—*Samuel Burder.*

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Verse 4.—There is in the original an antithesis, which cannot be conveyed by mere translation, arising from the fact that the first word for *man* is one implying strength.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 5.—"*Free among the dead.*" In the former verse he had said that he had approached very near to death, now he is plainly dead: there he was about to be buried, here he is laid in the sepulchre: thus had his sufferings increased. *Free* is to be understood of the affairs of this life, as when it is said, Job iii. 19, "And the servant is free from his master."—*Martin Bucer*, 1491—1551.

Verse 5.—"*Free among the dead.*" בַּמֵּתִים חָפְשִׁי *bammethim chophshi*, I rather think, means *stripped among the dead.* Both the *fourth* and *fifth* verses seem to allude to a *field of battle:* the *slain* and the *wounded* are found scattered over the plain; the *spoilers* come among them, and strip, not only the *dead*, but those also who appear to be *mortally wounded* and cannot recover, and are so feeble as not to be able to *resist.* Hence the Psalmist says, "*I am as a man that hath no strength*," verse 4.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 5.—"*Free.*" There is no immunity so long as we are in the flesh, there is no truce, but constant unrest distracts us. Liberty, therefore, is given to us after death, because we rest from our labours.—*Franciscus Vatablus.*

Verse 5.—"*Cut off from thy hand.*" Beware how you ever look upon yourself as *cut off* from life and from enjoyment; you are not cut off, only taken apart, laid aside, it may be but for a season, or it may be for life; but still you are part of the body of which Christ is the Head. Some must suffer and some must serve, but each one is necessary to the other, "the whole body is fitly framed together by that which every joint supplieth," "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you:" Eph. iv. 16; 1 Cor. xii. 21. Your feet may be set fast; they may have run with great activity, and you sorrow now, because they can run no more. But do not sorrow thus, do not envy those who are running; you have a work to do; it may be the work of the head, or of the eye, it surely is whatever work God gives to you. It may be the work of lying still, of not stirring hand or foot, of scarcely speaking, scarcely showing life. Fear not: if He your heavenly Master has given it to you to do, it is *His* work, and He will bless it. Do not repine. Do not say, *This* is work, and, this is *not;* how do you know? What work, think you, was Daniel doing in the lion's den? or Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace? Their work was glorious, "laudable, and honourable," they were glorifying God in suffering.—*From "Sickness, its Trials and Blessings."* [Anon.] 1868.

Verse 6.—"*Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit*," etc. He expands his meaning by another similitude. For he compares himself to a captive who has been cast into a deep, foul, dark, and slimy pit, where he is shut up and plunged in filth and darkness, having not a remnant of hope and life; after the manner of Jeremiah's sufferings, chap. xxxvii. By this simile he means that he was in the greatest anxieties and sorrows of mind, destitute of every hope and sense of consolation, and that the terrors of death continually increased and augmented.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 6.—When a saint is under terrible impressions of Jehovah's infinite wrath, he cannot but be under great horror of conscience, and in perplexing depths of mental trouble. The sense which he hath of avenging wrath, occasions a conflict in his spirit, inexpressibly agonizing and terrible. When his troubled conscience is inflamed, by a sense of the fiery indignation of God Almighty, the more he thinks of Him as his infinite enemy, the more he is dismayed: every thought of *Him*, brings doleful tidings, and pours oil upon the raging flame. Trouble of conscience for sin, is indeed very disquieting; but, a sense of the vindictive wrath of God, kindled in the conscience, is still more dreadful. No words can express the direful anguish, which the disconsolate

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soul then feels. The Christian cannot at that time think so much as one quiting, one cheering thought. What he first thinks of is tormenting to his wounded spirit: he changes that thought for another, and that is still more tormenting. He finds himself entangled, as in the midst of a thicket of thorns so that, which way soever he turns himself, he is pierced and grieved afresh. This dismal thought often arises in his troubled mind,—That if death were, in his present condition, to surprise and cut him off, he should sink for ever and ever, under the intolerable wrath of the infinite Jehovah. The most exquisite torment of body is almost nothing, in comparison of the anguish of his spirit at such times. Oh! how inconceivable is the anguish, the agony, especially of a holy soul, when it is conflicting with the tremendous wrath of the eternal God! The bodily torture even of crucifixion, could not extort from the holy Jesus the smallest sigh or complaint; but the sense of his Father's wrath in his soul, wrung from him that doleful outcry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"—*John Colquhoun, in "A Treatise on Spiritual Comfort."* 1814.

Verse 7.—"*Thy wrath lieth hard upon me.*" Others read, *sustains itself*, or *bears up itself upon me*, which is as if a giant should with his whole weight stay himself upon a child.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 7.—There are some that feel the wrath of God on their souls and consciences, and yet are not under wrath, but are true saints of God. Examples ye have in Paul, that chosen vessel of God to bear the name of Jesus among the Gentiles, he had fightings without and terrors within. Heman the Ezrahite said, 'The waves of the Lord's indignation are gone over my head, so that they are like to drown me; I suffer terrors and doubtings from my very youth, so that I can never be quit of them.' And both these were the dear children of God. Now, if thou feelest nothing but wrath, and thou dost ask how thou shalt judge of thy state when thou art bearing such a wrath, that put all the sand of the sea in balance with it, it would overweigh it; and when thou hast such a fire in thy conscience, that, put iron and brass in that fire, it would melt them, for they were not able to abide it: how then shalt thou know, in this case, that thou art loved of God, and that he hath chosen thee to eternal life? I tell thee, if thou art the chosen child of God, and a vessel of mercy, under a sense of wrath, in this estate this will be thy disposition. First, Thou wilt hate and detest thy sin, which is the cause of thy misery, and hath brought thee to this pain. Secondly, Thou wilt have some dolour and sorrow for thy sin, and thou wilt lament because thou hast provoked God to anger against thee. Thirdly, Thou wilt have a desire to be reconciled to God; and thou wouldst gladly be at peace with him, that thy sins may be taken away out of his sight. Fourthly, There will be hunger and thirst for the blood of Christ to quench that wrath, and for his righteousness to cover thy soul. Fifthly, There will be a patient waiting upon the Lord's deliverance, and when thou canst not get to this persuasion, then there will be a hope above hope, and thou wilt say with Job, xiii. 15, 'Lord, I will trust in thee, though thou shouldst slay me.'—*John Welch.*

Verse 8.—There are times when an unspeakable sadness steals upon me, an immense loneliness takes possession of my soul, a longing perchance for some vanished hand and voice to comfort me as of old, a desolation without form and void, that wraps me in its folds, and darkens my inmost being. It was not thus in the first days of my illness. Then all was so new and strange, that a strange spiritual strength filled my soul, and seemed to bear me up as with angel hands. The love and kindness that my sickness called forth, came to me with a sweet surprise; tender solicitude made my very pain into an occasion of joy to me; and hope was strong and recovery was near, only a few brief weeks between me and returning health, with nothing of sickness remaining, but the memory of all that love and sympathy, like a line of light my Saviour's feet had left, as he walked with me on the troubled sea.

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But now that hope is deferred, and returning health seems to loiter by the way, and recovery is delayed, and the trial lengthens out like an ever-lengthening chain, my soul begins to faint and tire, and the burthen to grow heavier. Even to those who love me most, my pain and helplessness is now an accustomed thing, while to me it keeps its keen edge of suffering, but little dulled by use. My ills to them are a tedious oft-told tale which comes with something of a dull reiterance. It has become almost a matter of course that in the pleasant plan I should be left out, that in the pleasant walk I should be left behind; a matter of course that the pleasures of life should pass me by with folded hand and averted face; and sickness, and monotonous days, and grey shadows should be my portion. . . . .

And O my God, my spirit sometimes faints beneath a nameless dread that this loneliness will grow deeper and deeper, if it be thy will that my sickness should continue, or recovery be long delayed. I can no longer be the companion of those I love; shall I be as dear to them as if I could have kept by their side, and been bound up with all their active interests and pleasures? I have to see others take my place, and do my work for them; shall I not suffer loss in their eyes, and others enter into the heritage of love which might have been mine? Will they not grow weary of me, weary of the same old ills, oft repeated, but ever new, and turn with an unconscious feeling of relief, to brighter hearts, and more joyous lives?

My God, my God, to whom can I turn for comfort but unto thee, thou who didst drink the bitter cup of human loneliness to the dregs that thou mightest make thyself a brother to the lonely, a merciful and faithful High Priest to the desolate soul; thou who alone canst pass within, the doors being shut to all human aid, into that secret place of thunder, where the tempest-tossed soul suffers and struggles alone; thou who alone canst command the winds and tempests, and say unto the sea "Be still!" and unto the wind, "Blow not!" and there shall be a great calm.

As a child alone in the dark, my heart cries out for thee, cries for thine embracing arms, for thy voice of comfort, for thy pierced heart on which to rest my aching head, and feel that Love is near.—*From "Christ the Consoler. A Book of Comfort for the Sick."* [Anon.] 1872.

Verse 8.—"*Thou hast put away mine acquaintance.*" This tempest of afflictions is all the heavier, because, First, all my acquaintance departed far from me, like swallows in winter time: Prov. xiv. 20. *The poor is hated even of his own neighbour, but the rich hath many friends.* Seneca wisely admonishes: *Flies follow honey, wolves corpses, ants food, the mob follows the pay, not the man.* Job said, Chap. xix. 13, He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. Secondly, Not only do they often depart from the afflicted, but they themselves add to his trouble, and precipitate his falling fortune. A rich man beginning to fall is held up by his friends; but a poor man being down, is thrust away by those who once pretended to love him.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou hast made me an abomination unto them:*" *lit*, "abominations," as if I were one great mass of abominations. (Gen. xlvi. 34; xliii. 32). As Israel was an abomination to the Egyptians, so Messiah, the antitypical Israel, was to the world.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 8.—"*An abomination.*" As one who is unclean,—excluded from social intercourse; Gen. xlvi. 34. Compare Job ix. 31; xix. 19; xxx. 10. "*I cannot come forth.*" The man suspected of leprosy was "shut up seven days;" Levit. xiii. 4.—*William Kay.*

Verse 9.—"*Mine eye mourneth,*" . . . "*I have called.*" Weeping must not hinder praying; we must sow in tears: "*Mine eye mourns,*" but "*I cry unto thee daily.*" Let prayers and tears go together, and they shall be accepted together: "I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears."—*Matthew Henry.*

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Verse 9.—The first clause seems literally to mean the soreness and dimness of sight caused by excessive weeping, and is so taken by many of the commentators, and Lorinus aptly quotes a Latin poet, *Catullus*, in illustration :—

> Mœsta neque assiduo tabescere lumina fletu
> Cessarent.
> Nor my sad eyes to pine with constant tears
> Could cease.
>
> —*Neale's Commentary.*

Verse 10.—He assureth himself God would not fail to comfort him before he died ; and again, that the Lord would rather miraculously raise him from the dead, than not glorify himself in his deliverance : and in this also he taketh a safe course, for he seeks for what he might expect, rather in an ordinary way, than by looking for miracles.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 10.—"*Shall the dead arise and praise thee?*" So far from this being an argument against the resurrection, it is Messiah's own most powerful plea for it—that otherwise man would be deprived of salvation, and God of the praise which the redeemed shall give for it to all eternity. Thou canst not show wonders to *the dead* as such ; for "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." (Matt. xxii. 32.) Or even if thou wert to show thy wonders, it is only by their rising to life again that they can duly praise thee for them.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 10.—"*The dead.*" The word comes from a root which expresses what is weak and languid, and at the same time stretched out and long-extended, and which can accordingly be employed to describe the shadowy forms of the under world as well as the giants and heroes of the olden time.—*Carl Bernhard Moll, in Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 10.—"*The dead.*" An attentive consideration seems to leave little room for doubt that the dead were called Rephaim (as Gesenius also hints) from some notion of Scheol being the residence of the fallen spirits or buried giants.—*F. W. Farrar, in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible.*

Verses 10, 11.—Can my soul ever come to think I shall live in thy favour, in thy free grace and loving-kindness, to be justified by it, to apprehend myself a living man, and all my sins forgiven? To do this, saith he, is as great a wonder as to raise a man up from death to life ; therefore he useth that expression, "*Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?*" He calleth it a wonder ; for of all works else, you shall find in Scripture the resurrection from the dead counted the greatest wonder.

The phrase in the 10th verse, as the Septuagint translates it, is exceeding emphatical. Saith he, "Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? Shall the physicians arise and praise thee?" So they read it, and so some good Hebrecians read it also ; that is, Go send for all the college of physicians, all the angels out of heaven, all the skilful ministers and prophets that were then upon the earth, Gad and David, for he lived in David's time ; send for them all. All these physicians may come with their cordials and balms ; they will never cure me, never heal my soul, never raise me up to life again, except thou raise me ; for I am "free among the dead," saith he. Now then, to work faith in such a one ; for this poor soul, being thus dead, to go out of himself, and by naked and sheer faith to go to Jesus Christ alone, whom God raised from the dead, and to believe on him alone ; this is now as great a power as indeed to raise a man up from death to life.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verses 10—12.—In these verses we find mention made of four things on the part of God : "wonders," "loving-kindness," "faithfulness," and "righteousness." These were four attributes of the blessed Jehovah which the eyes of Heman had been opened to see, and which the heart of Heman had been wrought upon to feel. But he comes, by divine teaching, into a spot where these attributes seem to be completely lost to him ; and yet, (so mysterious are the ways of God !) that spot was made the very place where those attributes

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were more powerfully displayed, and made more deeply and experimentally known to his soul.

The Lord led the blind by a way that he knew not into these spots of experience, that in them he might more fully open up to him those attributes of which he had already gained a glimpse; but the Lord brought him in such a mysterious way, that all his former knowledge was baffled. He therefore puts up this inquiry to the Lord, how it was possible that in those spots where he now was, these attributes could be displayed or made known?

1. He begins—"*Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?*" He is speaking here of his own experience; *he* is that "dead" person to whom those "wonders" are to be shown. And being in that state of experience, he considered that every act of mercy shown to him where he then was, must be a "wonder." "*Shall the dead arise and praise thee?*" What! the dark, stupid, cold, barren, helpless soul, that cannot lift up one little finger, that cannot utter one spiritual word, that cannot put forth one gracious desire, that cannot lift up itself a hair's breadth out of the mass that presses it down—"Shall it *arise?*" and more than that, "*praise thee?*" What! can lamentation ever be turned into praise? Can complaint ever be changed into thanksgiving? Can the mourner ever shout and sing? Oh, it is a wonder of wonders, if "the dead" are to "arise," if "the dead" are to "praise thee;" if the dead are to stand upon their feet, and shout victory through thy blood!—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 11.—"*In the grave.*" Here is a striking figure of what a living soul feels under the manifestations of the deep corruptions of his heart. All his good words, once so esteemed; and all his good works, once so prized; and all his prayers, and all his faith, and hope, and love, and all the imaginations of his heart, are not merely paralysed and dead, not merely reduced to a state of utter helplessness, but also in soul-feeling turned into rottenness and corruption. When we feel this we are spiritually brought where Heman was, when he said, "Shall thy lovingkindness be *declared* in the grave?" What! wilt thou manifest thy love to a stinking corpse? What! is thy love to be shed abroad in a heart full of pollution and putrefaction? Is thy lovingkindness to come forth from thy glorious sanctuary, where thou sittest enthroned in majesty, and holiness, and purity,—is it to leave that eternal abode of ineffable light and glory, and enter into the dark, polluted, and loathsome "grave"? What! is thy lovingkindness to come out of the sanctuary into the charnel-house? Shall it be "declared" *there*—revealed there—spoken there—manifested there—made known there? For nothing else but the *declaration* of it there will do. He does not say, "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the Scriptures?" "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in Christ?" "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared by the mouth of ministers?" "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in holy and pure hearts?"—but he says, "Shall thy lovingkindness be *declared*," uttered, spoken, revealed, manifested, "in the *grave?*" where everything is contrary to it, where everything is unworthy of it,—the last of all places fit for the lovingkindness of an all-pure God to enter.—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 11.—"*Thy faithfulness in destruction.*" You will see God's faithfulness to have been manifested most,—in destruction. You will see God's faithfulness to his covenant most clearly evidenced in destroying your false religion, in order to set up his own kingdom in your soul; in destroying everything which alienated and drew away your affections from him, that he alone might be enshrined in your hearts; and you will say, when the Lord leads you to look at the path he has led you, in after years, "Of all God's mercies his greatest have been those that seemed at the time to be the greatest miseries; the richest blessings which he has given us, are those which came wrapped up in the outside covering of curses; and his faithfulness has been as much or more manifested in destruction, than in restoration."—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 11.—It is not by leaving man in the "destruction" which sin and death produce, that God will declare his "faithfulness" to his promises which have

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flowed out of his "loving-kindness;" for instance, his promise that the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head (Gen. xiii. 15; and Hos. xiii. 14).—*A. R. Faussett.*

Verse 12.—"*Wilt thou show thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?*"—where I have forgotten thee, where I turned aside from thee, where I have let slip out of my memory all thy previous dealings with me—and shall thy righteousness be manifested even there? Wilt thou prove thine equity in showing forth mercy, because for me a sacrifice has been offered, thy righteousness running parallel with the atoning stream of Christ's blood? When I have forgotten thee and forsaken thee, and turned my back upon thee, can thy righteousness be there manifested? What! righteousness running side by side with mercy! and righteousness still preserving all its unbending strictness, because this very backsliding of heart, this very forgetfulness of soul, this very alienation of affection, this very turning my back upon thee, have all been atoned for; and righteousness can be still shown "in the land of forgetfulness," because all my sins committed in the land of forgetfulness have been atoned for by redeeming blood!—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verse 13.—"*But,*" etc. That "*but*" seems to come in as an expression of his resolution hitherto, that though these were his apprehensions of his condition, yet he had sought the Lord, and would go on to do the same. Suppose thou findest no relish in the ordinances, yet use them; thou art desperately sick, yet eat still, take all that is brought thee, some strength will come of it. Say, Be I damned or saved, hypocrite or no hypocrite, I resolve to go on. —*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 13.—"*In the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.*" The morning prayer is the best. . . . In the morning God gave various gifts. First, the manna, Exod. xvi. 13, *And in the morning the dew lay round about the host:* He who is in the camp of God, and bravely fights, receives from God dew and consolation, if in the morning, that is, in the beginning of temptation, he prays. In the evening flesh was given, whence death overtook them, but in another case in the morning the manna was given, whereby life was sustained, until they came into the land of promise. Secondly, the law was given in the morning, Exod. xix. 16, *And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud.* In morning devotion the thunders of God, that is, his judgments, are more distinctly heard; his lightnings, that is, his divine enlightenments, are best seen; the thick cloud upon the mount, that is, the divine overshadowing of the soul, is perceived; and the voice of the trumpet is best heard, that is, inspiration then with greater force moves the mind. Thirdly, in the morning, very early, the children of Israel went forth from Egypt; for in the middle of the night God smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, Exod. xii. 29. . . . In the morning pray, and you shall conquer your daily and nightly foes; and the Red Sea itself, that is the place of temptation, shall be to thee a field of glory, of victory and exultation and all things shall go well with thee.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 13.—"*Unto thee have I cried, O Lord.*" There is something concomitant with the Christian's present darkness of spirit that distinguisheth it from the hypocrite's horror; and that is the lively working of grace, which then commonly is very visible, when his peace and former comfort are most questioned by him; the less joy he hath from any present sense of the love of God, the more abounding you shall find him in sorrow for his sin that clouded his joy; the further Christ is gone out of his sight, the more he clings in his love to Christ, and vehemently cries after him in prayer, as we see in Heman here. O the fervent prayers that then are shot from his troubled spirit to heaven, the pangs of affection which are springing after God, and his face and favour! Never did a banished child more desire admittance into his angry

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father's presence, than he to have the light of God's countenance shine on him, which is now veiled from him.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 14.—"*Why hidest thou thy face from me?*" Numerous are the complaints of good men under this dark cloud; and to a child of light it is indeed a darkness that may be felt; it beclouds and bewilders the mind; the brightest evidences are in a great measure hid; the Bible itself is sealed, and fast closed; we see not our signs, nor our tokens for good; every good thing is at a distance from us, behind the cloud, and we cannot get at it; there is a dismal gloom upon our path; we know not where we are, where to step, nor which way to steer; which way God is gone we know not, but he knoweth the way that we take; and such a prayer as this suits us well,—Seek thy servants, for we are lost. Christ is hid, and there is a frowning cloud upon the sweet countenance of God, in which he hides his blessed face; or, as he did to the disciples, holds our eyes, that we should not see him. But, though this is often the case with believers, and they cannot see one beam of light before them; though all evidences are hid, and the light of the Lord's countenance is withdrawn; though no signs nor love tokens appear; and though the life-giving commandment is hid from them, and he shows them no wonders out of his law; yet, these Israelites have light in their dwellings—they have light to see the corruptions of their own hearts; to see the workings of unbelief, legal pride, enmity, rebellion, the double diligence of Satan, and the wretched advantages he takes of them in these dark seasons.—*William Huntington.*

Verse 15.—"*I am afflicted.*" (Vulg. *Pauper sum ego.*) God more readily hears the poor, and gives himself wholly to them. First, his eyes, to behold them, Ps. xi. 5, "*His eyes behold the poor.*" Secondly, his ears, to hear them, Ps. x. 17, "*Thou wilt prepare their hearts, thou wilt cause thine ears to hear.*" Thirdly, his hand, to help, Ps. cvii. 41, "*Yet setteth he the poor on high from his affliction.*" Fourthly, his breast and his arms, to receive the fugitives and those in peril, Ps. lx. 9, "*The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed.*" Fifthly, memory to recollect for them, Ps. ix. 18, "*The needy shall not alway be forgotten.*" Sixthly, intellect, to care for them, and watch over their comfort, Ps. xl. 17, "*But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me.*" Seventhly, goodwill, to love their prayers, Ps. xxii. 24, "*For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath he hid his face from him.*" Eighthly and lastly, he gives himself wholly to them, to preserve them, Ps. lxxii. 13, "*He shall save the souls of the needy.*"—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 15.—"*I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up.*" How much some suffer! I have seen a child, who at the age of twenty months had probably suffered more bodily pain than the whole congregation of a thousand souls, where its parents worshipped. Asaph seems to have been of a sad heart. Jeremiah lived and died lamenting. Heman seems to have been of the same lot and of the same turn of mind.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 15—(*First clause*). We found the heat more oppressive this day than we had yet experienced it. The hillocks of sand between which we were slowly moving at the usual camel's pace, reflected the sun's rays upon us, till our faces were glowing as if we had been by the side of a furnace. . . . . Perhaps it was through this part of the desert of Shur that Hagar wandered, intending to go back to her native country; and it may have been by this way that Joseph carried the young child Jesus when they fled into the land of Egypt. Even in tender infancy the sufferings of the Redeemer began, and he complains, "*I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up.*" Perhaps these scorching beams beat upon his infant brow, and this sand-laden breeze dried up his infant lips, while the heat of the curse of God began to melt his heart within. Even in the desert we see the suretyship of Jesus.—*R. M. McCheyne's* "*Narrative of a Mission of Inquiry to the Jews.*"

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Verse 15.—"*From my youth up.*" That is, for a long time;—so long, that the remembrance of it seems to go back to my very childhood. My whole life has been a life of trouble and sorrow, and I have not strength to bear it longer. It may have been literally true that the author of the psalm had been a man always afflicted; or, this may be the language of strong emotion, meaning that his sufferings had been of so long continuance that they seemed to him to have begun in his very boyhood.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 15.—"*While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.*" The word doth not signify properly the distraction of a man that is mad, but the distraction of a man that is in doubt. It is the distraction of a man who knows not what to do, not of a man who knows not what he doth, and yet that distraction doth often lead to a degree of this; for a man who is much troubled to know what to do, and cannot know it, grows at last to do he knows not what.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 15.—"*While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.*" The psalm hath this striking peculiarity in it, namely, that it not only hath reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, and him alone; but that he himself is the sole speaker from the beginning to the end. And although the whole of the psalms are of him, and concerning him, more or less, and he is the great object and subject of all; yet, secondarily and subordinately we meet with many parts in the psalms where his church is also noticed, and becomes concerned, from union with him, in what is said. But in this psalm there is allusion to no other.* All is of him and his incommunicable work. All is of the Son of God in our nature. It contains an account of the cries of the Lord Jesus "when in the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears."

The soul-agonies of Christ even from the moment of his incarnation to his death, may be contemplated, or read, from the sacred records of Scripture, but cannot come within the province of any created power to conceive, much less unfold. It is remarkable that whatever the Lord meant to convey by the phrase, "*I am distracted,*" this is the only place in the whole Bible where the word "*distracted*" is used. Indeed the inspired writers have varied their terms of expression, when speaking of Christ's sufferings, as if unable to convey any full idea. Matthew renders it that the Lord Jesus said: "*My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death!*" (Matt. xxvi. 38.) Mark describes him as "being sore amazed, and very heavy!" (Mark xiv. 33.) And Luke: his "being in an agony!" (Luke xxii. 44.) But here we must rest, in point of apprehension, for we can proceed no further.—*Robert Hawker.*

Verse 15.—O Lord, the monotony of my changeless days oppresses me, the constant weariness of my body weighs me down. I am weary of gazing on the same dull objects: I am tired of going through the same dull round day after day; the very inanimate things about my room, and the patterns on the walls, seem quickened with the waste of my life, and, through the power of association, my own thoughts and my own pain come back upon me from them with a dull reverberation. My heart is too tired to hope; I dare not look forward to the future; I expect nothing from the days to come, and yet my heart sinks at the thought of the grey waste of years before me; and I wonder how I shall endure, whether I shall faint by the way, before I reach my far-off home.—*From "Christ the Consoler."*

Verse 16.—"*Thy fierce wrath goeth over me.*" Like a sea of liquid fire; (xlii. 7).—*Heb.* "Thy hot *wraths.*" LXX. *αἱ ὀργαί σου.*—*William Kay.*

Verse 16.—"*Thy terrors have cut me off.*" In the Hebrew verb the last syllable is repeated for the purpose of putting vehemence into the expression. The word צָמַת signifies, to shut up and press into some narrow place, in order that one may not breathe or escape. . . . . In this sense Gregory Nazianzen in his

* We differ from Dr. Hawker in his exclusion of the saints from this Psalm. Where the Head is the members are never far away.—Ed.

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first oration concerning peace, calls grief δεσμον καρδιας (the prison of the heart).—*Mollerus.*

Verse 17.—"*Like water;*" not merely because it drowns, but because it searches every crevice, goes to the very bottom, and makes its way on all sides when once it obtains an entrance, thus fitly denoting the penetrating force of temptation and trouble.—*Hugo Cardinalis.*

Verse 18.—"*Lover and friend hast thou put far from me,*" etc. Next to the joys of religion, those of friendship are most rational, sublime, and satisfactory. But they, like all other earthly joys, have their mixtures and alloys, and are very precarious. We are often called to weep with our friends, and sometimes to weep over them. Grief and tears for their death are the sad tribute we pay for loving and being beloved, and living long in this world. This seems to have been the case with the author of this melancholy Psalm, where our text is. He was exercised with great afflictions of body, and deep distress of mind. "His soul was full of troubles, and his life drew nigh to the grave. He was shut up and confined by weakness and pain, and could not go forth," to his business or pleasure, to the social or solemn assembly, ver. 3—8. He adds, that "he had been afflicted and ready to die from his youth up," ver. 15; which seems to intimate that he was now an old man. Some of his acquaintance and friends had deserted him, and he was "become an abomination to them," v. 8. They would not assist him, nor afford him the comfort of a friendly visit, and the cheap kindness of a soft, compassionate word. Others of them, who would have been faithful and kind to him in his distress, were taken out of the world; and this at a time when, through age and infirmities, he peculiarly needed their company and assistance. To this he refers in the text; and with this he concludes the psalm, as the heaviest stroke of all, "*Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.*" This is a common case; and frequently the case of the aged. It is no unusual thing for old people to outlive their nearest relations; the companions of their lives; their children, and sometimes their grandchildren too; and they are, as the psalmist expresseth it, "like a sparrow alone upon the house-top." . . . . .

What chiefly afflicted the psalmist, and will afflict every generous heart, was, that his friends and lovers were removed into "*darkness;*" that is, to the grave, which is called in Scripture, "the land of darkness and the shadow of death, without any order or succession; and where the light is as darkness." Job x. 21, 22. They were put so far from him, that he could see them no more; were dead and buried out of his sight; neither would one of their friends on earth any more behold them. Thus are our friends put into darkness. The eyes that used to sparkle with pleasure, when we met after a long absence, are closed in death. The voice that used to delight and edify us is sealed up in everlasting silence. There is no conversing with them personally nor by letters. Not lands and seas divide us from them, but regions of vast, unknown space, which we cannot yet pass over; and which they cannot and indeed would not tread back, as much as they loved us. We have no way of conveying intelligence to them or receiving it from them. Perhaps they were put far away from us in their youth, or in the midst of their days and usefulness; when we promised ourselves many years of pleasure in their friendship and converse, and expected many years of service from them, for their families, for the church, and the world. Alas! one awful, fatal stroke hath broken down all the pleasing fabric of love and happiness.

But these are reflections which must not be dwelt upon. When they begin to grow very painful, as they soon will, it is time to turn our thoughts to that which is the second thing observable in the text; namely, the psalmist's devout acknowledgment of the hand of God in this affliction. "*Thou hast put them far from me.*" This good man, through the whole psalm, ascribeth all his afflictions, and particularly the death of his friends, to the hand of God. He

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takes no notice of their diseases; he neither blames them for imprudence and delay, nor those who attended them for neglect or misapplication; but looks beyond all second causes to the great Lord of all; owns him as the supreme sovereign of every life, and disposer of every event. And we shall do well to make this idea of the blessed God familiar to our minds, as it is at once most instructive and most comfortable.

The holy Scriptures confirm the dictates of reason upon this subject; assuring us that God "maketh peace and createth evil;" that "out of the mouth of the Lord proceedeth evil and good;" that the most casual events are under his direction, so that "not a sparrow falleth to," nor lighteth on, "the ground without him;" much less do his rational creatures and children die without his notice and appointment. By whatever disease or casualties they die, it is God who "taketh away their breath, changeth their countenance, and sendeth them into darkness." With awful majesty God claimeth this as his prerogative; "I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." (Deut. xxxii. 39.) He removeth our friends who hath a right to do it. They were our friends, but they are his creatures; and may he not do what he will with his own? He gave them life of his free goodness, and he hath a right to demand it when he pleaseth. Dear as they were to us, we must acknowledge they were sinners; and, as such, had forfeited their lives to the justice of God: and shall not he determine when to take them away? They were our friends; but do we not hope and believe that, by repentance, faith in Christ, and sanctifying grace, they were become his friends too; dear to him by many indissoluble ties? Hath he not then a superior claim to them, and a greater interest in them? Is it not fit that he should be served first? May he not call home his friends when he pleaseth? Shall he wait for, or ask, our consent first? He doth it, whom we cannot, dare not, gainsay. "Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, what doest thou?" (Job ix. 12.) He doth it, who is infinitely good and wise; and doth everything in the best time and manner. His knowledge is perfect and unerring; his goodness boundless and never-failing. Though his judgments are a great deep, and his schemes utterly unsearchable by us; yet we may reasonably believe that he consulteth the happiness of his servants in what is most mysterious and most grievous; and his word giveth us the strongest assurance of it. So that whether we exercise the faith of Christians, or the reason of men, we must acknowledge the hand of God, yea, his wisdom and goodness, in removing our acquaintance into darkness.—*Job Orton*, 1717—1783.

Verse 18.—"*Mine acquaintance into darkness.*" Rather, *my acquaintanceship is darkness*, that is, darkness is all I have to converse with; my circle of acquaintance is comprised in blank darkness.—*Ernest Hawkins.*

Verse 18.—To be discountenanced or coldly treated by Christian friends, is often a consequence of a believer's having forfeited his spiritual comfort. When the Lord is angry with his rebellious child, and is chastening him, he not only giveth Satan leave to trouble him, but permitteth some of the saints who are acquainted with him, to discountenance him, and by their cold treatment of him, to add to his grief. When the father of a family resolves the more effectually to correct his obstinate child, he will say to the rest of the household, "Do not be familiar with him; shew him no countenance; put him to shame." In like manner, when the Lord is smiting, especially with spiritual trouble, his disobedient child, he, as it were, saith to others of his children, "Have for a season no familiarity with him; treat him with coldness and neglect; in order that he may be ashamed, and humbled for his iniquity." Job, under his grievous affliction, complained thus, "He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me," &c. (ch. xix. 13—19). And likewise Heman, "*Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness.*" When the favour of God to the soul is clouded, the comfort of Christian society is also obscured. When He frowns on one, his children commonly appear to frown likewise; and when he makes himself strange to one, so for the

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most part do they. If a holy man, then, under trouble of spirit, begins to be treated with disregard, and even with contempt, by some of his Christian brethren, he ought not to be surprised; neither should he take occasion to be angry, or to quarrel with them; but he should look above them, and take the afflictive dispensation, only out of the hand of the Lord, as a necessary part of the chastisement intended for him. He ought to say with respect to them, as David concerning Shimei, "The Lord hath bidden them;" or, as Heman did, "THOU *hast put away my acquaintance far from me.*"—*John Colquhoun.*

Verse 18.—The very rhythm of the last line shows that the piece is not complete. The ear remains in suspense; until the majestic lxxxixth shall burst upon it like a bright Resurrection-morning.—*William Kay.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—I. Confidence in prayer,—"God of my salvation." II. Earnestness in prayer,—"I have cried." III. Perseverance in prayer,—"Day and night."—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—Prayer as an ambassador. I. An audience sought, or the benefit of access. II. Attention entreated, or the blessing of success. III. The Process explained, or prayer comes and God inclines.

Verse 3.—I. A good man is exposed to inward troubles. 1. To soul troubles. 2. To the soul full of troubles. II. To outward troubles. "My life," etc. 1. From outward persecutions. 2. From inward griefs. III. To both inward and outward troubles at the same time. "Soul full," etc., "*and* my life," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 4 (*last clause*).—Conscious weakness, painfully felt, at certain times, in various duties. Intended to keep us humble, to drive us to our knees, and to bring greater glory to God.

Verses 4, 5.—I. The resemblance of the righteous man to the wicked. 1. In natural death. 2. In bodily infirmities. II. His difference from them. He is "counted with them" but is not of them. 1. He experiences natural death only. 2. His strength is perfected in weakness. 3. For him to die is gain.—*G. R.*

Verses 6, 7.—1. What the afflictions of the people of God appear to be to themselves. 1. Extreme,—"laid me in the lowest pit." 2. Inexplicable,—"in darkness." 3. Humiliating,—"in the deeps." 4. Severe,—"thy wrath lieth hard." 5. Exhaustive.—"afflicted with all thy waves." II. What they are in reality. 1. Not extreme but light. 2. Not inexplicable, but according to the will of God. 3. Not humiliating, but elevating. "Humble yourselves under," etc. 4. Not severe but gentle. Not in anger but in love. 5. Not exhaustive but partial. Not all thy waves, but a few ripples only. The slight motion in the harbour when there is a boisterous ocean beyond.—*G. R.*

Verse 8 (*last clause*).—This may describe us when despondency is chronic, when trouble is overwhelming, when sickness detains us at home, when we feel restrained in Christian labour, or hampered in prayer.

Verse 9.—I. Sorrow before God,—"Mine eye," etc. II. Prayer to God,—"I have called," etc. III. Waiting for God,—"called daily." IV. Dependence on God,—"I have stretched," etc. These hands can do nothing without thee.—*G. R.*

Verses 10—12.—I. The supposition. 1. That a child of God should be wholly dead. 2. That he should remain for ever in the grave. 3. That he should be destroyed. 4. That he should always remain in darkness. 5. That he should be entirely forgotten, as though he had never existed. II. The consequences involved in this supposition. 1. God's wonders to them would cease.

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2. His praise from them would be lost. 3. His lovingkindness to them would be unknown. 4. His faithfulness destroyed. 5. His wonders to them would be lost to others. 6. His former righteousness to them would be forgotten. III. The plea founded upon these consequences,—"Wilt thou," etc. It cannot be that thy praise for grace shown to thy people can be lost, and none can render it but themselves. "Then what wilt thou do unto thy great name?"—*G. R.*

Verse 13.—I. Blessings delayed to prayer,—"Unto thee," etc. II. Blessings anticipated by prayer,—"In the morning," etc. Daily mercies anticipated by morning prayers.—*G. R.*

Verse 13 (*last clause*).—The advantages of early morning prayer-meetings.

Verse 14.—I. Afflictions are mysterious though just. II. Just though mysterious.—*G. R.*

Verse 14.—Solemn enquiries, to be followed by searching examinations, by sorrowful confessions, stern self-denials, and sweet restorations.

Verse 15.—I. The afflictions of the righteous may be long continued though severe. "I am afflicted, etc., from my youth up." II. Severe though long continued. 1. Painful,—"afflicted." 2. Threatening,—"ready to die." 3. Terrific,—"suffer thy terrors." 4. Distracting,—"I am," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 15.—The personal sufferings of Christ for the salvation of his people.—*Sermon by Robert Hawker.* Works, Vol. IV. p. 91.

Verse 16.—I. Good men are often tried men. II. Tried men frequently misjudge the Lord's dealings. III. The Lord does not take them at their word, he is better than their fears.—*G. R.*

Verse 18.—The loss of friends intended to remind us of our own mortality, to wean us from earth, to lead us to more complete trust in the Lord, to chasten us for sin, and to draw us away to the great meeting place.

Verse 18 —The words of our text will lead us to remark that, I. The happiness of life greatly depends on intimate friendships. II. The trial of parting with intimate friends is exceedingly painful. III. In this, as indeed in every affliction, the best consolation is drawn from a belief in, and meditation upon, God's governing providence.—*Joseph Lathrop*, 1845.

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PSALM LXXXIX.

We have now reached the majestic COVENANT PSALM, *which, according to the Jewish arrangement closes the third book of the Psalms. It is the utterance of a believer, in presence of great national disaster, pleading with his God, urging the grand argument of covenant engagements, and expecting deliverance and help, because of the faithfulness of Jehovah.*

TITLE.—Maschil. *This is most fitly called a* Maschil, *for it is most instructive. No subject is more important or is so fully the key to all theology as that of the covenant. He who is taught by the Holy Spirit to be clear upon the covenant of grace will be a scribe well instructed in the things of the kingdom; he whose doctrinal theory is a mingle-mangle of works and grace is scarcely fit to be teacher of babes.* OF ETHAN THE EZRAHITE: *perhaps the same person as Jeduthun, who was a musician in David's reign; was noted for his wisdom in Solomon's days, and probably survived till the troubles of Rehoboam's period. If this be the man, he must have written this psalm in his old age, when troubles were coming thick and heavy upon the dynasty of David and the land of Judah; this is not at all improbable, and there is much in the psalm which looks that way.*

DIVISIONS.—*The sacred poet commences by affirming his belief in the faithfulness of the Lord to his covenant with the house of David, and makes his first pause at verse* 4. *He then praises and magnifies the name of the Lord for his power, justice, and mercy,* 5—14. *This leads him to sing of the happiness of the people who have such a God to be their glory and defence,* 15—18. *He rehearses the terms of the covenant at full length with evident delight,* 19—37, *and then mournfully pours out his complaint and petition,* 38—51, *closing the whole with a hearty benediction and a double Amen. May the Holy Spirit greatly bless to us the reading of this most precious psalm of instruction.*

EXPOSITION.

I WILL sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.

2 For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.

3 I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant.

4 Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

1. "*I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever.*" A devout resolve, and very commendable when a man is exercised with great trouble on account of an apparent departure of the Lord from his covenant and promise. Whatever we may observe abroad or experience in our own persons, we ought still to praise God for his mercies, since they most certainly remain the same, whether we can perceive them or not. Sense sings but now and then, but faith is an eternal songster. Whether others sing or not, believers must never give over; in them should be constancy of praise, since God's love to them cannot by any possibility have changed, however providence may seem to frown. We are not only to believe the Lord's goodness, but to rejoice in it evermore; it is the source of all our joy, and as it cannot be dried up, so the stream ought never to fail to flow, or cease to flash in sparkling crystal of song. We have not one,

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but many *mercies* to rejoice in, and should therefore multiply the expressions of our thankfulness. It is *Jehovah* who deigns to deal out to us our daily benefits, and he is the all-sufficient and immutable God; therefore our rejoicing in him must never suffer diminution. By no means let his exchequer of glory be deprived of the continual revenue which we owe to it. Even time itself must not bound our praises—they must leap into eternity; he blesses us with eternal mercies—let us sing unto him *for ever*. "*With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.*" The utterances of the present will instruct future generations. What Ethan sung is now a text-book for Christians, and will be so as long as this dispensation shall last. We ought to have an eye to posterity in all that we write, for we are the schoolmasters of succeeding ages. Ethan first spoke with his mouth that which he recorded with his pen—a worthy example of using both means of communication; the mouth has a warmer manner than the pen, but the pen's speech lives longest, and is heard farther and wider. While reading this psalm, such in the freshness of the style, that one seems to hear it gushing from the poet's mouth; he makes the letters live and talk, or, rather, sing to us. Note, that in this second sentence he speaks of *faithfulness*, which is the mercy of God's mercies—the brightest jewel in the crown of goodness. The grace of an unfaithful God would be a poor subject for music, but unchangeable love and immutable promises demand everlasting songs. In times of trouble it is the divine faithfulness which the soul hangs upon; this is the bower anchor of the soul, its holdfast, and its stay. Because God is, and ever will be, faithful, we have a theme for song which will not be out of date for future generations; it will never be worn out, never be disproved, never be unnecessary, never be an idle subject, valueless to mankind. It will also be always desirable to make it known, for men are too apt to forget it, or to doubt it, when hard times press upon them. We cannot too much multiply testimonies to the Lord's faithful mercy—if our own generation should not need them others will: sceptics are so ready to repeat old doubts and invent new ones that believers should be equally prompt to bring forth evidences both old and new. Whoever may neglect this duty, those who are highly favoured, as Ethan was, should not be backward.

2. "*For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever.*" His heart was persuaded of it, and he had affirmed it as an indisputable truth. He was certain that upon a sure foundation the Lord intended to pile up a glorious palace of goodness—a house of refuge for all people, wherein the Son of David should for ever be glorified as the dispenser of heavenly grace. "*Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.*" This divine edifice, he felt assured, would tower into the skies, and would be turreted with divine faithfulness even as its foundations were laid in eternal love. God's faithfulness is no thing of earth, for here nothing is firm, and all things savour of the changes of the moon and the fickleness of the sea: heaven is the birthplace of truth, and there it dwells in eternal vigour. As the blue arch above us remains unimpaired by age, so does the Lord's truth; as in the firmament he hangs his covenant bow, so in the upper heavens the faithfulness of God is enthroned in immutable glory. This Ethan said, and this we may say; come what will, mercy and faithfulness are built up by "the Eternal Builder," and his own nature is the guarantee for their perpetuity. This is to be called to mind whenever the church is in trouble, or our own spirits bowed down with grief.

3. "*I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant.*" This was the ground of the Psalmist's confidence in God's mercy and truth, for he knew that the Lord had made a covenant of grace with David and his seed, and confirmed it by an oath. Here he quotes the very words of God, which were revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, and are a condensation of the original covenant in 2 Samuel vii. Well might he write in the former verse, "I have said," when he knew that Jehovah had said, "I have sworn." David was the Lord's elect, and with him a covenant was made, which

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ran along in the line of his seed until it received a final and never-ending fulfilment in "the Son of David." David's house must be royal: as long as there was a sceptre in Judah, David's seed must be the only rightful dynasty; the great "King of the Jews" died with that title above his head in the three current languages of the then known world, and at this day he is owned as king by men of every tongue. The oath sworn to David has not been broken, though the temporal crown is no longer worn, for in the covenant itself his kingdom was spoken of as enduring for ever. In Christ Jesus there is a covenant established with all the Lord's *chosen*, and they are by grace led to be the Lord's *servants*, and then are ordained kings and priests by Christ Jesus. How sweet it is to see the Lord, not only making a covenant, but owning to it in after days, and bearing witness to his own oath; this ought to be solid ground for faith, and Ethan, the Ezrahite, evidently thought it so. Let the reader and writer both pause over such glorious lines, and sing of the mercies of the Lord, who thus avows the bonds of the covenant, and, in so doing, gives a renewed pledge of his faithfulness to it. "*I have*," says the Lord, and yet again "*I have*," as though he himself was nothing loath to dwell upon the theme. We also would lovingly linger over the *ipsissima verba* of the covenant made with David, reading them carefully and with joy. There are thus recorded in 2 Sam. vii. 12—16: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." After reading this, let us remember that the Lord has said to us by his servant Isaiah, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

Verse 4.—"*Thy seed will I establish for ever.*" David must always have a seed, and truly in Jesus this is fulfilled beyond his hopes. What a seed David has in the multitude which have sprung from him who was both his Son and his Lord. The Son of David is the Great Progenitor, the second Adam, the Everlasting Father, he sees his seed, and in them beholds of the travail of his soul. "*And build up thy throne to all generations.*" David's dynasty never decays, but on the contrary, is evermore consolidated by the great Architect of heaven and earth. Jesus is a king as well as a progenitor, and his throne is ever being built up—his kingdom comes—his power extends.

Thus runs the covenant; and when the church declines, it is ours to plead it before the ever faithful God, as the psalmist does in the latter verses of this sacred song. Christ must reign, but why is his name blasphemed and his gospel so despised? The more gracious Christians are, the more will they be moved to jealousy by the sad estate of the Redeemer's cause, and the more will they argue the case with the great Covenant-maker, crying day and night before him, "Thy kingdom come."

"*Selah.*" It would not be meet to hurry on. Rest, O reader, at the bidding of this Selah, and let each syllable of the covenant ring in thine ears; and then lift up the heart and proceed with the sacred poet to tell forth the praises of the Lord.

5 And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.

6 For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? *who* among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD?

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7 God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all *them that are* about him.

8 O LORD God of hosts, who *is* a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?

9 Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.

10 Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.

11 The heavens *are* thine, the earth also *is* thine: *as for* the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.

12 The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.

13 Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, *and* high is thy right hand.

14 Justice and judgment *are* the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

5. "*And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord.*" Looking down upon what God had done, and was about to do, in connection with his covenant of grace, all heaven would be filled with adoring wonder. The sun and moon, which had been made tokens of the covenant, would praise God for such an extraordinary display of mercy, and the angels and redeemed spirits would sing, "as it were, a new song." "*Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.*" By which is probably intended the holy ones on earth. So that the "whole family in heaven and earth" would join in the praise. Earth and heaven are one in admiring and adoring the covenant God. Saints above see most clearly into the heights and depths of divine love, therefore they praise its wonders; and saints below, being conscious of their many sins and multiplied provocations of the Lord, admire his faithfulness. The heavens broke forth with music at the wonders of mercy contained in the glad tidings concerning Bethlehem, and the saints who came together in the temple magnified the faithfulness of God at the birth of the Son of David. Since that auspicious day, the general assembly on high and the sacred congregation below have not ceased to sing unto Jehovah, the Lord that keepeth covenant with his elect.

6. "*For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord;*" therefore all heaven worships him, seeing none can equal him. "*Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?*"—therefore the assemblies of the saints on earth adore him, seeing none can rival him. Until we can find one equally worthy to be praised, we will give unto the Lord alone all the homage of our praise. Neither among the sons of the morning nor the sons of the mighty can any peer be found for Jehovah, yea none that can be mentioned in the same day; therefore he is rightly praised. Since the Lord Jesus, both as God and as man, is far above all creatures, he also is to be devoutly worshipped. How full of poetic fire is this verse! How bold is the challenge! How triumphant the holy boasting! The sweet singer dwells upon the name of Jehovah with evident exultation; to him the God of Israel is God indeed and God alone. He closely follows the language long before rehearsed by Miriam, when she sang, "Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like thee?" His thoughts are evidently flying back to the days of Moses and the marvels of the Red Sea, when God was gloriously known by his incommunicable name; there is a ring of timbrels in the double question, and a sound as of the twinkling feet of rejoicing maidens. Have we no poets now? Is there not a man among us who can compose hymns flaming with this spirit? O, Spirit of the living God, be thou the inspirer of some master minds among us!

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7. "*God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints.*" The holiest tremble in the presence of the thrice Holy One: their familiarity is seasoned with the profoundest awe. Perfect love casts out the fear which hath torment, and works in lieu thereof that other fear which is akin to joy unutterable. How reverent should our worship be! Where angels veil their faces, men should surely bow in lowliest fashion. Sin is akin to presumptuous boldness, but holiness is sister to holy fear. "*And to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.*" The nearer they are the more they adore. If mere creatures are struck with awe, the courtiers and favourites of heaven must be yet more reverent in the presence of the Great King. God's children are those who most earnestly pray "hallowed be thy name." Irreverence is rebellion. Thoughts of the covenant of grace tend to create a deeper awe of God, they draw us closer to him, and the more his glories are seen by us in that nearer access, the more humbly we prostrate ourselves before his Majesty.

8. "*O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee?*" Or *Jehovah, God of Hosts, who is like thee, Mighty Jah.* Alexander remarks, that the infinite superiority of God to men and angels is here expressed, or rather indicated, by an accumulation of descriptive titles. Here we have the name which displays his self-existence, the title which denotes his dominion over all his creatures, and an adjective which sets forth the power with which he exercises his sovereignty. Yet this great and terrible God has entered into covenant with men! Who would not reverence him with deepest love? "*Or to thy faithfulness round about thee.*" He dwells in faithfulness; it is said to be the girdle of the loins of his only-begotten Son, who is the express image of his person. None in all creation is faithful as he is; even his angels might prove faithless if he left them to themselves, but he cannot "lie unto David," or forget to keep his oath. Men often fail in truth because their power is limited, and then they find it easier to break their word than to keep it; but the strong Jehovah is equal to all his engagements, and will assuredly keep them. Unrivalled might and unparalleled truth are wedded in the character of Jehovah. Blessed be his name that it is so.

9. "*Thou rulest the raging of the sea.*" Always, even in the hour of ocean's maddest fury, the Lord controls it. At the Red Sea the foaming billows saw their God and stood upright in awe. "*When the waves thereof arise, thou stilest them.*" None else can do this; to attempt it would be madness, but the Lord's "hush" silences the boisterous storm. So did the Lord's Anointed calm the storms of Galilee, for he is Lord of all; so also does the great Ruler of Providence evermore govern the fickle wills of men, and quiet the tumults of the people. As a mother stills her babe to sleep, so the Lord calms the fury of the sea, the anger of men, the tempest of adversity, the despair of the soul, and the rage of hell. "The Lord sitteth upon the floods; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever," and in all his ruling and over-ruling he has respect unto his covenant; therefore, although our house be not so with God as our hearts would wish, yet we will rejoice in his covenant ordered in all things and sure, and delight in him as all our salvation and all our desire.

10. "*Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces as one that is slain.*" Egypt was crushed like a corpse beneath the chariot wheels of the destroyer: its pomp and glory were broken like the limbs of the dead in battle. Egypt was Israel's ancient foe, and its overthrow was a theme to which devout minds constantly reverted, as to a subject fit for their most exulting songs. We, too, have seen our Rahab broken, our sins o'erthrown, and we cannot but unite in the ascription of praise unto the Lord. "*Thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.*" Thy strength has strewn thy foes dead upon the plain, or compelled them to flee hither and thither in dismay. Jehovah has overthrown his enemies with his own right arm, unaided and alone. Proud Rahab, swelling in her fury like the sea, was utterly broken and scattered before the Lord of Hosts.

11. "*The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine.*" All things are alike God's—rebellious earth as well as adoring heaven. Let us not despair of the

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kingdom of truth; the Lord has not abdicated the throne of earth or handed it over to the sway of Satan. "*As for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.*" The habitable and cultivated earth, with all its produce, owns the Lord to be both its Creator and Sustainer, builder and upholder.

12. "*The north and the south thou hast created them.*" North and south, opposite poles, agree in this—that Jehovah fashioned them. "*Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name,*" that is to say, east and west are equally formed by thee, and therefore give thee praise. Turn to all points of the compass, and behold the Lord is there. The regions of snow and the gardens of the sun are his dominions: both the land of the dawning and the home of the setting sun rejoice to own his sway. Tabor was on the west of Jordan and Hermon on the east, and it seems natural to consider these two mountains as representatives of the east and west. Keble paraphrases the passage thus:—

> "Both Hermon moist, and Tabor lone,
> They wait on thee with glad acclaim."

13. "*Thou hast a mighty arm,*" omnipotence is thine in smiting or uplifting; "*strong is thy hand,*" thy power to create and grasp is beyond conception great; "*and high is thy right hand*"—thy skill is incomparable, thy favour ennobling, thy working glorious. The power of God so impressed the psalmist that in many ways he repeated the same thought: and indeed the truth of God's omnipotence is so full of refreshment to gracious hearts that it cannot be too much dwelt upon, especially when viewed in connection with his mercy and truth, as in the following verse.

14. "*Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.*" They are the basis of the divine government, the sphere within which his sovereignty moves. God as a sovereign is never unjust or unwise. He is too holy to be unrighteous, too wise to be mistaken; this is constant matter for joy to the upright in heart. "*Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.*" They are the harbingers and heralds of the Lord; he calls these to the front to deal with guilty and changeful man; he makes them, in the person of the Lord Jesus, to be his ambassadors, and so poor, guilty man is enabled to endure the presence of his righteous Lord. If mercy had not paved the way, the coming of God to any man must have been swift destruction.

Thus has the poet sung the glories of the covenant God. It was meet that before he poured forth his lament he should record his praise, lest his sorrow should seem to have withered his faith. Before we argue our case before the Lord it is most becoming to acknowledge that we know him to be supremely great and good, whatever may be the appearance of his providence; this is such a course as every wise man will take who desires to have an answer of peace in the day of trouble.

15 Blessed *is* the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance,

16 In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.

17 For thou *art* the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.

18 For the LORD *is* our defence; and the Holy One of Israel *is* our king.

15. "*Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.*" He is a blessed God of whom the psalmist has been singing, and therefore they are a blessed people who partake of his bounty, and know how to exult in his favour. Praise is a peculiarly joyful sound, and blessed are those who are familiar with its strains. The covenant promises have also a sound beyond measure precious, and they are highly favoured who understand their meaning and recognise their own personal

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interest in them. There may also be a reference here to the blowing of trumpets and other gladsome noises which attended the worship of Jehovah, who, unlike the gods of the heathen was not adored by the shrieks of wretched victims, or the yells and outcries of terror-stricken crowds, but by the joyful shouts of his happy people. "*They shall walk, O* LORD, *in the light of thy countenance.*" For them it is joy enough that Jehovah is favourable to them; all day long this contents them and enables them with vigour to pursue their pilgrimage. Only a covenant God could look with favour upon men, and those who have known him in that relationship learn to rejoice in him, yea, to walk with him in fellowship, and to continue in communion with him. If we give God our ear and hear the joyful sound, he will shew us his face and make us glad. While the sun shines, men walk without stumbling as to their feet, and when the Lord smiles on us we live without grief as to our souls.

16. "*In thy name shall they rejoice all the day.*" And good cause they have for so doing, for to the soul which, in Christ Jesus, has entered into covenant with God, every attribute is a fountain of delight. There is no hour in the day, and no day in our life, in which we may not rejoice in the name, person, and character of the Lord. We need no other reason for rejoicing. As philosophers could make merry without music, so can we rejoice without carnal comforts; the Lord All-sufficient is an all-sufficient source of joy. "*And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*" By the Lord's righteous dealings the saints are uplifted in due time, however great may have been the oppression and the depression from which they may have suffered. In the righteousness which the covenant supplies, which is entirely of the Lord, believers are set on high, in a secure and blessed position, so that they are full of sacred happiness. If God were unjust, or if he regarded us as being without righteousness, we must be filled with misery, but as neither of these things are so, we are exalted indeed, and would extol the name of the Lord.

17. "*For thou art the glory of their strength.*" Surely in the Lord Jehovah have we both righteousness and strength. He is our beauty and glory when we are strong in him, as well as our comfort and sustenance when we tremble because of conscious weakness in ourselves. No man whom the Lord makes strong may dare to glory in himself, he must ascribe all honour to the Lord alone; we have neither strength nor beauty apart from him. "*And in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.*" By the use of the word *our* the psalmist identifies himself with the blessed people, and this indicates how much sweeter it is to sing in the first person than concerning others. May we have grace to claim a place among those in covenant with God, in Christ Jesus, for then a sense of divine favour will make us also bold and joyous. A creature full of strength and courage lifts up its horn, and so also does a believer become potent, valiant, and daring. The horn was an eastern ornament, worn by men and women, or at least is so at this day, and by the uplifting of this the wearer showed himself to be in good spirits, and in a confident frame of mind: we wear no such outward vanities. but our inward soul is adorned and made bravely triumphant when the favour of God is felt by us. Worldly men need outward prosperity to make them lift up their heads, but the saints find more than enough encouragement in the secret love of God.

18. "*For the* LORD *is our defence.*" Whoever else may defend us, he is our ultimate Defender and Shield. "*And the Holy One of Israel is our king.*" He who protects should govern, our defender should be acknowledged as our king. Kings are called the shields of nations, and the God of Israel is both our Ruler and our Defence. Another sense may be that Israel's defender and king was of the Lord, belonging to him and sent by him; even the protectors of the land being themselves protected by the Lord. The title "the Holy One of Israel" is peculiarly delightful to the renewed heart. God is one, we worship none beside. He is holiness itself, the only being who can be called "the Holy One," and in his perfection of character we see the most excellent reason for our faith. He who is holy cannot break his promises, or act unjustly concerning

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his oath and covenant. Moreover, he is the Holy One *of Israel*, being specially the God of his own elect, ours by peculiar ties, ours for ever and ever. Who among the saints will not rejoice in the God of election? Are they not indeed a people greatly blessed who can call this God their God for ever and ever?

19 Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon *one that is* mighty; I have exalted *one* chosen out of the people.
20 I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him:
21 With whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him.
22 The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him.
23 And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him.
24 But my faithfulness and my mercy *shall be* with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted.
25 I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.
26 He shall cry unto me, Thou *art* my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.
27 Also I will make him *my* firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.
28 My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him.
29 His seed also will I make *to endure* for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.
30 If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments;
31 If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments;
32 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.
33 Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.
34 My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.
35 Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.
36 His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.
37 It shall be established for ever as the moon, and *as* a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.

19. "*Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one.*" The psalmist returns to a consideration of the covenant made with David. The holy one here meant may be either David or Nathan the prophet, but most probably the latter,

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for it was to him that the word of the Lord came by night. 2 Sam. vii., 4, 5. God condescends to employ his gracious ministers to be the means of communication between himself and his favoured ones,—even to King David the covenant was revealed by Nathan the prophet; thus the Lord puts honour upon his ministers. "*I have laid help upon one that is mighty.*" The Lord had made David a mighty man of valour, and now he covenants to make him the helper and defender of the Jewish state. In a far fuller sense the Lord Jesus is essentially and immeasurably mighty, and on him the salvation of his people rests by divine appointment, while his success is secured by divine strength being engaged to be with him. Let us lay our faith where God has laid our help. "*I have exalted one chosen out of the people.*" David was God's elect, elect out of the people, as one of themselves, and elect to the highest position in the state. In his extraction, election, and exaltation, he was an eminent type of the Lord Jesus, who is the man of the people, the chosen of God, and the king of his church. Whom God exalts let us exalt. Woe unto those who despise him, they are guilty of contempt of court before the Lord of Hosts, as well as of rejecting the Son of God.

20. "*I have found David my servant.*" David was discovered by the Lord among the sheepfolds and recognised as a man of gracious spirit, full of faith and courage, and therefore fit to be leader in Israel. "*With my holy oil have I anointed him.*" By the hand of Samuel, David was anointed to be king long before he ascended the throne. The verse must also be expounded of the Prince Emanuel; he became the servant of the Lord for our sakes, the Father having found for us in his person a mighty deliverer, therefore upon him rested the Spirit without measure, to qualify him for all the offices of love to which he was set apart. We have not a Saviour self-appointed and unqualified, but one sent of God and divinely endowed for his work. Our Saviour Jesus is also the Lord's Christ, or anointed. The oil with which he is anointed is God's own oil, and holy oil; he is divinely endowed with the Spirit of holiness.

21. "*With whom my hand shall be established,*" or, "with whom my hand shall ever be present." The almightiness of God abides permanently with Jesus in his work as Redeemer and Ruler of his people. "*Mine arm also shall strengthen him.*" The fulness of divine power shall attend him. This covenant promise ought to be urged in prayer before the Lord, for the great lack of the church at this time is power. We have everything except the divine energy, and we must never rest content until we see it in full operation among us. Jesus must be among us, and then there will be no lack of force in any of our church agencies.

22. "*The enemy shall not exact upon him;*" he shall not be vexed and persecuted as a helpless debtor by an extortionate creditor. "*Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.*" Graceless men shall no longer make his life a burden. David had in his earlier history been hunted by Saul like a partridge on the mountains, and though he had striven in all things to act justly towards Saul, because he was the Lord's anointed, yet Saul was never content with his displays of loyalty, but persecuted him relentlessly. The covenant, therefore, engaged that his life of hardship and oppression should come to an end for ever; it did so in David's own person, and more remarkably still in the life of Solomon his son. Who does not in all this see a type of the Lord Jesus, who though he was once seized for our debts, and also evil entreated by the ungodly, is now so exalted that he can never be exacted upon any more, neither can the fiercest of his enemies vex him again. No Judas can now betray him to death, no Pilate can deliver him to be crucified. Satan cannot tempt him, and our sins cannot burden him.

23. "*And I will beat down his foes before his face*"—crushing them and their plans. God himself thus fights the battles of his Son, and effectually overturns his foes. "*And plague them that hate him,*" or *smite his haters.* May none of us learn the terror of this threatening, which is surely being fulfilled upon all those unbelievers who have rejected the Son of God, and died in the

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hardness of their hearts. The prophecy is also having another fulfilment in the overthrow of systems of error, and the vexation caused to their promoters. There is no such plague to bad men as the prosperity of the cause of Jesus.

24. "*But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him.*" These were the two attributes of which the psalmist began to sing in the first verse of the psalm, doubtless because he saw them to be most prominent in the covenant which he was about to plead with God. To David and his seed, God was gracious and faithful, and though through their sin the literal kingdom lost all its glory and the dynasty became obscure, yet the line remained unbroken and more than all its former glory was restored by the enthronisation of Him who is Prince of the kings of the earth, with whom the Lord's mercy and faithfulness remain for ever. All who are in Jesus should rejoice, for they shall prove in their own experience the faithful mercy of the Lord. "*And in my name shall his horn be exalted.*" Gloriously does the Lord Jesus lift up his head, raised to the highest place of honour by the mandate of the Father. David and Solomon in their dignity were but faint types of the Lord Jesus, who is far above all principalities and powers. The fullest exaltation of the horn of Jesus is yet to come in that millenial period which is hastening on.

25. "*I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.*" He shall reach far beyond the little rivers which stand for boundaries in Palestine; he shall by his power embrace all lands from sea to sea. He shall lave his hand in the ocean and his right hand in earth's mightiest streams. As monarchs hold in their hands a globe to set forth their dominion over the earth, he shall grasp the far more unconquerable sea, and be Lord of all. This power is to be given him of the Lord, and is to be abiding; so we understand the words "*I will set.*" The verse has in it a voice of good cheer concerning sailors, and all dwellers on the waters; the hand of Jesus is over them, and as he found his first apostles by the sea, so we trust he still finds earnest disciples there.

26. "*He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father.*" David's seed would be a praying race, and so in the main they were, and when they were not they smarted for it. The Lord Jesus was pre-eminent in prayer, and his favourite mode of address was "Father." Never was there a son more filial in his cries than "the Firstborn among many brethren." God had one Son without sin, but he never had a Son who lived without prayer. "*My God,*" so our Lord called his Father when upon the cross. "*And the rock of my salvation.*" It was to his Father that he turned for help when in sore anguish in Gethsemane, and to him he committed his spirit in the article of death. In this filial crying the true sons should imitate him. This is the common language of the elect family: adoption, reverence, trust, must all speak in their turns, and will do if we are heirs according to promise. To say to God "Thou art my father" is more than learning and talent can teach us; the new birth is essential to this. Reader, hast thou the nature of a child and the spirit of one who can cry, "Abba, Father"?

27. "*Also I will make him my firstborn.*" Among the kings the seed of David were to be most favoured and indulged with most love and paternal regard from God: but in Jesus we see this in the highest degree verified, for he has pre-eminence in all things, inasmuch as by inheritance he has a more glorious name than any other, and is "*higher than the kings of the earth.*" Who can rival heaven's Firstborn? The double portion and the government belong to him. Kings are honoured when they honour him, and those who honour him are kings! In the millenial glory it shall be seen what the covenant stores up for the once despised Son of David, but even now faith sees him exalted as King of kings and Lord of lords. Lo, we bow before thee, thou Heir of all things! Our sheaves do obeisance to thy sheaf. All thy mother's children call thee blessed. Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise. Jesus is no servant of princes, nor would he have his bride, the church, degrade herself by bowing before kings and eating the bread of a pensioner at their hands. He

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and his kingdom are higher than the kings of the earth. Let the great ones of the earth be wise and submit to him, for he is Lord, and he is the governor among the nations.

28. "*My mercy will I keep for him for evermore.*" The kings of David's line needed mercy, and mercy prevented their house from utterly perishing until the Son of Mary came. He needs no mercy for himself, but he is a representative man, and the mercy of God is required for those who are in him: for such mercy is kept for ever. "*And my covenant shall stand fast with him.*" With Jesus the covenant is ratified both by blood of sacrifice and by oath of God; it cannot be cancelled or altered, but is an eternal verity, resting upon the veracity of one who cannot lie. What exultation fills our hearts as we see that the covenant of grace is *sure* to all the seed, because it stands fast with *him* with whom we are indissolubly united.

29. "*His seed also will I make to endure for ever.*" David's seed lives on in the person of the Lord Jesus, and the seed of Jesus in the persons of believers. Saints are a race that neither death nor hell can kill. Rome and its priests, with their inquisition and other infernal cruelties, have laboured to exterminate the covenant seed, but "vain is their rage, their efforts vain." As long as God lives, his people must live. "*And his throne as the days of heaven.*" Jesus reigns on, and will reign till the skies shall fall, yea, and when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, his throne shall stand. What a blessed covenant is this! Some commentators talk of conditions, but we fail to see any; the promises are as absolute as they can possibly be, and if any conditions as to the conduct of the favoured individuals can be conceived, they are disposed of in the succeeding verses.

30. "*If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments.*" It was possible, terribly possible, that David's posterity might wander from the Lord; indeed they did so, but what then? Was the mercy of God to pass away from David's seed?—far from it. So, too, the seed of the Son of David are apt to start aside, but are they therefore cast away? Not a single word gives liberty for such an idea, but the very reverse. Expositors in their fear of Calvinistic doctrine shake off the fear of adding to the word of God, or else they would not have spent their time in talking about "the conditions" of this absolutely unconditional covenant.

31. "*If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments.*" The dreadful "*if*" is suggested again, and the sad case is stated in other forms. But if it should be so, what then? Death and rejection? Ah, no; Blessed be God, No! If their sin be negative or positive, if it be forsaking or profanation; if either judgments or commandments or both be violated, yet there is not a word as to final destruction, but the very reverse. Legalism will import its ifs, but the Lord slays the ifs as fast as they rise. Eternal shalls and wills make glorious havoc among the ifs and buts.

32. "*Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod.*" Not with the sword, not with death and destruction; but still with a smarting, tingling, painful rod. Saints must smart if they sin: God will see to that. He hates sin too much not to visit it, and he loves his saints too well not to chasten them. God never plays with his rod, he lays it well home to his children, he *visits* them with it in their houses, bodies, and hearts, and makes them know that he is grieved with their ways. He smites home and chastens "*their iniquity with stripes,*" which are either many or few in proportion as the heart is properly affected by them. The rod is a covenant blessing, and is meant to be used. As sin is so frequent, the rod never rests long together; in God's family the rod is not spared, or the children would be spoiled.

33. "*Nevertheless.*" And a glorious nevertheless too! "*Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him.*" O glorious fear-killing sentence! This crowns the covenant with exceeding glory. Mercy may seem to depart from the Lord's chosen, but it shall never altogether do so. Jesus still enjoys the divine favour, and we are in him, and therefore under the most

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trying circumstances the Lord's lovingkindness to each one of his chosen will endure the strain. If the covenant could be made void by our sins it would have been void long ere this; and if renewed its tenure would not be worth an hour's purchase if it had remained dependent upon us. God may leave his people, and they may thereby suffer much and fall very low, but utterly and altogether he never can remove his love from them; for that would be to cast a reflection upon his own truth, and this he will never allow, for he adds, "*nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.*" Man fails in all points, but God in none. To be faithful is one of the eternal characteristics of God, in which he always places a great part of his glory: his truth is one of his peculiar treasures and crown jewels, and he will never endure that it should be tarnished in any degree. This passage sweetly assures us that the heirs of glory shall not be utterly cast off. Let those deny the safety of the saints who choose to do so, we have not so learned Christ. We believe in the gospel rod, but not in the penal sword for the adopted sons.

34. "*My covenant will I not break.*" It is his own covenant. He devised it, drew up the draft of it, and voluntarily entered into it; he therefore thinks much of it. It is not a man's covenant, but the Lord claims it as his own. It is an evil thing among men for one to be a "covenant-breaker," and such an opprobrious epithet shall never be applicable to the Most High. "*Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.*" Alterations and afterthoughts belong to short-sighted beings who meet with unexpected events which operate upon them to change their minds, but the Lord who sees everything from the beginning has no such reason for shifting his ground. He is besides immutable in his nature and designs, and cannot change in heart, and therefore not in promise. A word once given is sacred; once let a promise pass our lips and honesty forbids that we should recall it,—unless indeed the thing promised be impossible, or wicked, neither of which can happen with the promises of God. How consoling it is to see the Lord thus resolute. He, in the words before us, virtually reasserts his covenant and rehearses his engagements. This he does at such length, and with such reiteration, that it is evident he takes pleasure in that most ancient and solemn contract. If it were conceivable that he had repented of it, he would not be found dwelling upon it, and repeating it with renewed emphasis.

35. "*Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.*" Because he could swear by no greater he swore by himself, and by that peculiar attribute which is his highest glory, being the subject of threefold adoration by all the hosts of heaven. God here pledges the crown of his kingdom, the excellent beauty of his person, the essence of his nature. He does as good as say that if he ceases to be true to his covenant he will have forfeited his holy character. What more can he say? In what stronger language can he express his unalterable adherence to the truth of his promise? An oath is the end of all strife; it ought to be the end of all doubt on our part. We cannot imagine that God could lie, yet he puts it so—that if the covenant were not kept by him, he would regard it as a lie. Here is ground for strong confidence; may our faith be of such a nature as these assurances will warrant.

36. "*His seed shall endure for ever.*" David's line in the person of Jesus is an endless one, and the race of Jesus, as represented in successive generations of believers, shows no sign of failure. No power, human or Satanic, can break the Christian succession; as saints die others shall rise up to fill their places, so that till the last day, the day of doom, Jesus shall have a seed to serve him. "*And his throne as the sun before me.*" In our Lord Jesus the dynasty of David remains upon the throne. Jesus has never abdicated, nor gone into banishment. He reigns, and must reign so long as the sun continues to shine upon the earth. A seed and a throne are the two great promises of the covenant, and they are as important to us as to our Lord Jesus himself; for we are the seed who must endure for ever, and we are protected and ennobled by that King whose royalties are to last for ever.

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37. "*It shall be established for ever as the moon.*" The kingdom may wax and wane to mortal eyes, but it shall still abide as long as the moon walks in her silver beauty. "*And as a faithful witness in heaven.*" The most stable part of the universe is selected as a type of Messiah's kingdom, and both sun and moon are made to be symbols of its long endurance. Whatever else there is in the sky which faithfully witnesses to the unbending course of nature is also called upon to be a sign of the Lord's truth. When heaven and earth witness, and the Lord himself swears, there remains no excuse for doubting, and faith joyfully reposes in confident expectation.

38 But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.

39 Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant: thou hast profaned his crown *by casting it* to the ground.

40 Thou hast broken down all his hedges; thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin.

41 All that pass by the way spoil him: he is a reproach to his neighbours.

42 Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries; thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.

43 Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle.

44 Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground.

45 The days of his youth hast thou shortened: thou hast covered him with shame. Selah.

46 How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire?

47 Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?

48 What man *is he that* liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.

49 Lord, where *are* thy former lovingkindnesses, *which* thou swarest unto David in thy truth?

50 Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants; *how* I do bear in my bosom *the reproach of* all the mighty people:

51 Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.

52 Blessed *be* the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen.

38. "*But thou hast cast off and abhorred.*" The Lord had promised not to cast off the seed of David, and yet it looked as if he had done so, and that too in the most angry manner, as if he loathed the person of the king. God's actions may appear to us to be the reverse of his promises, and then our best course is to come before him in prayer and put the matter before him just as it strikes our apprehension. We are allowed to do this, for this holy and inspired man did so unrebuked, but we must do it humbly and in faith. "*Thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.*" He deserved the wrath, doubtless, but the psalmist's point is, that this appeared to him to conflict with the gracious covenant. He puts the matter plainly, and makes bold with the Lord, and the Lord loves to have his servants so do; it shows that they believe his engagements to be matters of fact.

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39. "*Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant.*" The dispensations of providence looked as if there had been a disannulling of the sacred compact, though indeed it was not so. "*Thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground.*" The king had been subject to such sorrow and shame that his diadem had been as it were taken from his head, dashed on the earth, and rolled in the mire. He was a theocratic monarch, and the Lord, who gave him his crown, took it from him and treated it with contempt,—at least so it seemed. In these sad days also we may utter the same plaint, for Jesus is not acknowledged in many of the churches, and usurpers have profaned his crown. When we hear of kings and queens set up as "heads of the church," and a priest styled "The Vicar of Christ," while parliaments and courts take upon themselves to legislate for the church of God, we may bitterly lament that things should come to so wretched a pass. Few are there who will acknowledge the crown rights of King Jesus, the very subject is considered to be out of date. O Lord how long!

40. "*Thou hast broken down all his hedges.*" He was no longer sheltered from the slanderous assaults of contemptuous tongues; the awe which should guard the royal name had ceased to separate him from his fellows. The "divinity which doth hedge a king" had departed. Hitherto, the royal family had been like a vine within an enclosure, but the wall was now laid low, and the vine was unprotected. It is sorrowfully true that in many places the enclosures of the church have been destroyed, the line of demarcation between the church and the world has almost vanished, and godless men fill the sacred offices. Alas, O Lord God, shall it be always so? Shall thy true vine be deserted by thee, thou great Husbandman? Set up the boundaries again, and keep thy church as a vineyard reserved for thyself. "*Thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin.*" The forts of the land were in the possession of the enemy and were dismantled, the defences of the kingdom were overthrown. Thus has it happened that precious truths, which were the bulwarks of the church, have been assailed by heresy, and the citadels of sound doctrine have been abandoned to the foe. O God, how canst thou suffer this? As the God of truth, wilt thou not arise and tread down falsehood?

41. "*All that pass by the way spoil him.*" Idle passers-by, who have nothing else to do, must needs have a pluck at this vine, and they do it without difficulty, since the hedges are gone. Woe is the day when every petty reasoner has an argument against religion, and men in their cups are fluent with objections against the gospel of Jesus. Although Jesus on the cross is nothing to them, and they pass him by without inquiring into what he has done for them, yet they can loiter as long as you will, if there be but the hope of driving another nail into his hands and helping to crucify the Lord afresh. They will not touch him with the finger of faith, but they pluck at him with the hand of malice. "*He is a reproach to his neighbours.*" David's successors had unneighbourly neighbours, who were a reproach to good fellowship, because they were so ready to reproach their neighbour. The Jews were much taunted by the surrounding Gentiles when at any time they fell into trouble. At this time the people of God, who follow the Lord fully, are subject to a thousand reproaches, and some of them of the most bitter kind. These reproaches are really the reproach of Christ, and, at bottom, are meant for him. Shall it always be so? Shall he, who deserves to be universally adored, be subject to general scorn? Where, then, O God, is thy faithfulness to thy covenant?

42. "*Thou hast set up the right hand of thy adversaries.*" Thou hast done it, *thou*, who hast sworn to give him help and victory, thou hast, instead thereof, sided with his enemies, and lent them thy strength, so that they have gained the supremacy. "*Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.*" They are boasting over him, and are glorying in his defeat, and this is done by thyself. O God,—how is this? Where is the covenant? Hast thou forgotten thine own pledges and promises?

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43. "*Also turned the edge of his sword.*" When he goes to war he is as unsuccessful as though his sword refused to cut, and gave way like a sword of lead. His weapons fail him. "*And hast not made him to stand in the battle.*" His heart fails him as well as his sword—he wavers, he falls. This has happened even to naturally brave men—a terrible dread has unmanned them. At this present the church has few swords of true Jerusalem metal; her sons are pliable, her ministers yield to pressure. We need men whose edge cannot be turned, firm for truth, keen against error, sharp towards sin, cutting their way into men's hearts. Courage and decision are more needed now than ever, for charity towards heresy is the fashionable vice, and indifference to all truth, under the name of liberal-mindedness, is the crowning virtue of the age. The Lord send us men of the school of Elias, or, at least, of Luther and Knox.

44. "*Thou hast made his glory to cease.*" The brightness of his reign and the prosperity of his house are gone, his fame is tarnished, his honour disgraced. "*And cast his throne down to the ground.*" He has lost his power to govern at home or to conquer abroad. This happened to kings of David's line, and, more grievous to tell, it is happening in these days to the visible kingdom of the Lord Jesus. Where are the glories of Pentecost? Where is the majesty of the Reformation? Where does his kingdom come among the sons of men? Woe is unto us, for the glory has departed, and the gospel throne of Jesus is hidden from our eyes!

45. "*The days of his youth hast thou shortened.*" The time of the king's energy was brief, he grew feeble before his time. "*Thou hast covered him with shame.*" Shame was heaped upon him because of his premature decay and his failure in arms. This was very grievous to the writer of this psalm, who was evidently a most loyal adherent of the house of David. In this our day we have to bemoan the lack of vigour in religion—the heroic days of Christianity are over, her raven locks are sprinkled with untimely grey. Is this according to the covenant? Can this be as the Lord has promised? Let us plead with the righteous Judge of all the earth, and beseech him to fulfil his word wherein he has promised that those who wait upon him shall renew their strength.

Selah. The interceding poet takes breath amid his lament, and then turns from describing the sorrows of the kingdom to pleading with the Lord.

46. "*How long, Lord?*" The appeal is to Jehovah, and the argument is the length of the affliction endured. Chastisement with a rod is not a lengthened matter, therefore he appeals to God to cut short the time of tribulation. "*Wilt thou hide thyself for ever?*" Hast thou not promised to appear for thy servant—wilt thou then for ever forsake him? "*Shall thy wrath burn like fire?*" Shall it go on and on evermore till it utterly consume its object? Be pleased to set a bound! How far wilt thou go? Wilt thou burn up the throne which thou hast sworn to perpetuate? Even thus we would entreat the Lord to remember the cause of Christ in these days. Can he be so angry with his church as to leave her much longer? How far will he suffer things to go? Shall truth die out, and saints exist no more? How long will he leave matters to take their course? Surely he must interpose soon, for, if he do not, true religion will be utterly consumed, as it were, with fire.

47. "*Remember how short my time is.*" If so brief, do not make it altogether bitter. If thine anger burn on it will outlast this mortal life, and then there will be no time for thy mercy to restore me. Some expositors ascribe these words, and all the preceding verses, to the state of the Lord Jesus in the days of his humiliation, and this gives an instructive meaning; but we prefer to continue our reference all through to the church, which is the seed of the Lord Jesus, even as the succeeding kings were the seed of David. We, having transgressed, are made to feel the rod, but we pray the Lord not to continue his stripes lest our whole life be passed in misery. "*Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?*" If the Lord do not shine upon his work we live for nothing—we count it no longer life if his cause does not prosper. We live if the King lives, but not else. Everything is vanity if religion be vanity. If the kingdom of

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heaven should fail, everything is a failure. Creation is a blot, providence an error, and our own existence a hell, if the faithfulness of God can fail and his covenant of grace can be dissolved. If the gospel system can be disproved, nothing remains for us or any other of the sons of men, which can render existence worth the having.

48. "*What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?*" All must die. None of our race can answer to the question here propounded except in the negative; there is none that can claim to elude the arrows of death. "*Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?*" Neither by strength, wisdom, nor virtue can any man escape the common doom, for to the dust return we must. Since then we must all die, do not make this life all wretchedness, by smiting us so long, O Lord. Thy Son our covenant Head died, and so also shall we; let us not be so deserted of thee in this brief span that we shall be quite unable to testify to thy faithfulness; make us not feel that we have lived in vain. Thus the brevity of life and the certainty of death are turned into pleas with the Most High.

"*Selah.*" Here we rest again, and proceed to further pleadings.

49. "*Lord, where are thy former lovingkindnesses, which thou swarest unto David in thy truth?*" Here he comes to grand pleading, hand to hand work with the covenant angel. We may remind the Lord of his first deeds of love, his former love to his church, his former favour to ourselves. Then may we plead his oath, and beg him to remember that he has sworn to bless his chosen; and we may wrestle hard also, by urging upon him his own character, and laying hold upon his inviolable truth. When things look black we may bring forth our strong reasons, and debate the case with our condescending God, who has himself said, "Come now, and let us reason together."

50. "*Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants.*" By reason of their great troubles they were made a mock of by ungodly men, and hence the Lord's pity is entreated. Will a father stand by and see his children insulted? The psalmist entreats the Lord to compassionate the wretchedness brought upon his servants by the taunts of their adversaries, who jested at them on account of their sufferings. "*How I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people.*" The psalmist himself laid the scorn of the great and the proud to heart. He felt as if all the reproaches which vexed his nation were centred in himself, and therefore in sacred sympathy with the people he poured out his heart. We ought to weep with those that weep; reproach brought upon the saints and their cause ought to burden us: if we can hear Christ blasphemed, and see his servants insulted, and remain unmoved, we have not the true Israelite's spirit. Our grief at the griefs of the Lord's people may be pleaded in prayer, and it will be acceptable argument.

There is one interpretation of this verse which must not be passed over; the original is, "*Remember my bearing in my bosom all the many nations;*" and this may be understood as a pleading of the church that the Lord would remember her because she was yet to be the mother of many nations, according to the prophecy of Ps. lxxvii. She was as it were ready to give birth to nations, but how could they be born if she herself died in the meanwhile? The church is the hope of the world; should she expire, the nations would never come to the birth of regeneration, but must abide in death.

51. "*Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O Lord.*" Here is another forcible point; the scoffers are the Lord's enemies as well as ours, and ther reproach falls upon him as well as upon us; therefore we cry for the Lord's interposition. When Jehovah's own name is in the quarrel, surely he will arise. "*Wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.*" Tracking him and finding occasion to blaspheme at every turn; not only watching his words and actions, but even his harmless steps. Neither Christ nor his church can please the world, whichever way we turn scoffers will rail. Does this verse refer to the oft-repeated sarcasm—"Where is the promise of his coming?" Is the reproach aimed at the delays of the Messiah, those long-expected footfalls

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which as yet are unheard? O Lord, how long shall this thread-bare taunt continue? How long? How long?

"Come, for creation groans
Impatient of thy stay,
Worn out with these long years of ill,
These ages of delay.

Come, in thy glorious might,
Come with the iron rod,
Scattering thy foes before thy face,
Most Mighty Son of God."

52. "*Blessed be the Lord for evermore.*" He ends where he began; he has sailed round the world and reached port again. Let us bless God before we pray, and while we pray, and when we have done praying, for he always deserves it of us. If we cannot understand him, we will not distrust him. When his ways are beyond our judgment we will not be so foolish as to judge; yet we shall do so if we consider his dealings to be unkind or unfaithful. He is, he must be, he shall be, for ever, our blessed God. "*Amen, and Amen.*" All our hearts say so. So be it, Lord, we wish it over and over again. Be thou blessed evermore.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The present psalm makes a pair with the preceding one. It is a spiritual Allegro to that Penseroso . . . That Psalm was a dirge of Passion-Tide, this Psalm is a carol of Christmas.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—There are many passages in this psalm which do clearly evidence that it is to be interpreted of Christ; yea, there are many things in this psalm that can never be clearly, pertinently, and appositely applied to any but Jesus Christ. For a taste, see ver. 19, "*I have laid help upon one that is mighty,*" mighty to pardon, reconcile, to justify, to save, to bring to glory; suitable to that of the Apostle, Heb. vii. 25, "He is able to save to the uttermost"—that is, to all ends and purposes, perfectly, completely, fully, continually, perpetually. Christ is a thorough Saviour, a might Saviour: Isa. lxiii. 1, "Mighty to save." There needs none to come after him to finish the work which he hath begun: ver. 19, "*I have exalted one chosen out of the people,*" which is the very title given to our Lord Jesus: Isa. xlii. 1, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect," or chosen one, "in whom my soul delighteth": ver. 20. "*I have found David my servant.*" Christ is very frequently called by that name, as being most dearly beloved of God, and most highly esteemed and valued by God, and as being typified by him both as king and prophet of his church: ver. 20, "*With my holy oil have I anointed him;*" suitable to that of Christ; Luke iv. 18, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor;" and therefore we need not doubt of the excellency, authority, certainty, and sufficiency of the gospel: ver. 27, "*I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.*" Christ is the first-born of every creature, and in all things hath the pre-eminence: ver. 29, "*His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.*" This is chiefly spoken of Christ and his kingdom. The aspectable heaven is corruptible, but the kingdom of heaven is eternal; and such shall be Christ's seed, throne and kingdom: ver. 36, "*His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.*" "Christ shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand," Isa. liii. 10. "*And his throne as the sun before me*"; that is, perpetual and glorious, as the Chaldee explaineth it, "*shall shine as the sun.*" Other kingdoms and thrones have their times and their turns, their rise and their ruins, but so hath not the kingdom and

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throne of Jesus Christ. Christ's dominion is "an everlasting dominion," which shall not pass away; "and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed," Dan. vii. 13, 14. I might give further instances out of this psalm, but enough is as good as a feast. Now saith God, "I have made a covenant with him;" so then there is a covenant that God the Father hath made with Christ the Mediator; which covenant, the Father engages to the Son, shall stand fast, there shall be no cancelling or disannulling of it. God the Father hath not only made a covenant of grace with the saints in Christ, but he has also made a covenant of redemption, as we call it for distinction sake, with Jesus Christ himself: "My covenant shall stand fast with him;" that is, with Christ, as we have fully demonstrated.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 1.—This one short verse contains the summary, pith, and argument of the whole long psalm; wherein observe THE SONG'S DITTY, *the lovingkindness and truth of the Lord*, manifested unto the whole world generally, to David's house (that is, the church) especially. THE SINGER'S DUTY, *magnifying the mercies of God always*, even *from one generation to another*. And by all means; with his *mouth*, for that is expressed in this verse; with his *mind*, for that is implied in the next—"*I have said*," etc., that is, believed in my heart, and therefore spake it with my tongue, Ps. cxvi., 10. "For out of the heart's abundance the mouth speaketh," Matt. xii. 34.—*John Boys.*

Verse 1.—"*I will sing.*" It is to be observed that he does not say, I will *speak* of the goodness of the Lord; but, I will sing. The celebration of the divine goodness has joined with itself the joy and exultation of a pious mind, which cannot be poured forth better than in song. That pleasantness and exuberance of a happy spirit, which by singing is instilled into the ears of the listeners, has a certain wonderful power of moving the affections; so that not in vain were pious minds taught by the Holy Spirit to inculcate the wonderful work of God in songs composed for this purpose, to commit them to memory and to appoint them to be sung.—*Musculus.*

Verse 1.—"*I will sing.*" The Psalmist has a very sad complaint to make of the deplorable condition of the family of David at this time, and yet he begins the psalm with songs of praise; for we must in every thing, in every state, give thanks. We think when we are in trouble we get ease by complaining: but we do more, we get joy, by praising. Let our complaints therefore be turned into thanksgiving; and in these verses we find that which will be in matter of praise and thanksgiving for us in the worst of times, whether upon a personal or public account.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 1.—"*Sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever.*" S. Gregory the Great raises the question here as to how a perpetual singing of the *mercies* of God is compatible with unalloyed bliss in heaven, inasmuch as the thought of mercy connotes the memory of sin and sorrow, which needed mercy, whereas Isaiah saith that "the former troubles are forgotten," and "the former things shall not be remembered, nor come upon the heart" (ch. lxv. 16, 17). And he replies that it will be like the memory of past sickness in time of health, without stain, without grief, and serving only to heighten the felicity of the redeemed, by the contrast with the past, and to increase their love and gratitude towards God. And so sings the Cluniac:*

"Their breasts are filled with gladness,
Their mouths are tuned to praise,
What time, now safe for ever,
On former sins they gaze:
The fouler was the error,
The sadder was the fall,
The ampler are the praises
Of him who pardoned all."

* Bernard of Clairvaux.

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Note, too, that he says, "with *my* mouth," not with that of any deputy; "*I will make known*," not secretly or timidly, not in a whisper, but boldly preach, "*Thy faithfulness*," or *truth*, not my own opinion, far less my own falsehood, but Thy Truth, which is, Thine Only-begotten Son.—*Gregory, Bernard, Hugo, and Augustine: quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 1.—"*Mercies.*" The word may be rendered *graces, kindnesses, goodnesses*, and designs the abundance of grace.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—"*The mercies.*" His manifold and sundry mercies: as if he should say, we have tasted of more than one, yea, we have felt all his mercies; I will therefore praise the same for ever. I will sing his mercy for creating this universe, which is *macrocosmos*, a great world; and for making man, which is *microcosmos*, a little world. 1. My song shall set forth his kindness, for that he gave me being. 2. For adding to my being, life, which he denieth unto stones. 3. To life, sense, which he denieth unto plants. 4. To sense, speech and understanding, which he denieth unto brute beasts. . . . . .

I am exceeding much bound unto God for creating me when I was not; and for preserving me under his wings ever since I was: yet I am more bound to his mercy for redeeming me, for blessing me with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ his Son (Eph. 1, 3), for his electing of me, for his calling of me, for his justifying of me, for his sanctifying of me. These graces are the riches of his goodness and glory, *misericordiæ in æternum*, everlasting mercies, as reaching from everlasting predestination to everlasting glorification. O Lord, I will always sing thy *mercies* in promising, and ever shew thy *truth* in performing thy promise made to David, thy chosen servant, concerning thy Son, my Saviour, saying, "Thy seed will I establish for ever." So the fathers expound our text: I will ever sing thy mercies, in vouchsafing to send thy Son to visit thy servants, sick to death in sin. First, I will ever sing of thy mercifulness, and then will ever be shewing thy faithfulness. *Neque enim exhiberetur veritas in impletione promissorum, nisi præcederet misericordia in remissione peccatorum.* (*For truth, in the fulfilment of the promises, would not be shown forth; unless mercy, in the forgiveness of sins, should precede it.*) And what is *God's mercy set up for ever, and his truth established in the heavens*, but that which Isaiah terms, "the sure mercies of David": that is, as Paul construeth Isaiah, the holy promise made to David: and the promise made to David, is briefly this, "Thy seed will I establish for ever, and set up thy throne from generation to generation."—*John Boys.*

Verse 1.—"*For ever.*" I know some join *in æternum* to the noun *misericordias*, and not to the verb *cantabo*, making the sense to be this: I will always sing thy mercies which endure for ever. But *always* is referred as well, if not better, unto the verb, "*I will sing:*" as who would say, Lord, thy mercies are so manifest, and so manifold, so great in their number, and so good in their nature, that I will alway, so long as I have any being, sing praises unto thee Haply some will object, "All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth," (Isa. xl. 6, 7). David being persecuted by Saul, said, "There is but a step between me and death," (1 Sam. xx. 3). Nay, David, thy life is shorter than a stride, but "a span long," as thyself witnesseth, Ps. xxxix. 5. How can he then that begs his bread but for a day promise to spend his breath in magnifying the Lord for ever? Answer is made, that the prophet will not only commend the mercies of the Lord in word, but also commit them unto writing. *Ut sciat hæc ætas, posteritasque legat* * (*that this age may know, and that posterity may read.*) As the tongue of the prophet is termed elsewhere "the pen of a writer;" so the writing of the Prophet is here termed *his mouth*, as Euthymeus upon the place (Acts iv. 25), *Liber Psalmorum os David* (*The Book of Psalms is the mouth of David*). He doth intend to note the mercies of God, and to set forth his truth in a book, the which he will leave behind him (as an instrument) to convey the same *from*

* Eobanus Hessus.

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generation to generation, from the generation of Jews to the generation of Christians. Or from the Old Testament to the New: for the blessed Apostles in their sermons usually cite sentences out of the Psalms. S. Peter telleth us that the gospel was preached unto the dead (1 Peter iv. 6); so may we say, that the gospel is preached by the dead. For the most ancient fathers, and other judicious authors, who have spent their days in writing learned expositions and godly meditations upon the Holy Scriptures, although they be dead, yet they "sing all the mercies of the Lord, and shew the truth of his word from one generation to another." It is reported in our chronicles of Athelstan, *parum ætati vixit, multum gloriæ* (*he lived but little of time, but much of glory*). So many zealous and industrious doctors have lived (in respect of their age) but a little, yet in respect of their acts, a great while, shining still in their works and writings, as lights of the world.

Or the prophet may be said to *sing ever* intentionally, though not actually. For as the wicked, if he could live alway, would sin alway, so the good man (if God should suffer him alway to breathe on earth) would sing alway the mercies of the Lord.—*John Boys.*

Verse 1.—"*With my mouth.*" The author has heard continual praises from a tongue half eaten away with cancer. What use, beloved reader, are you making of your tongue?—*Philip Bennett Power.*

Verse 2.—"*I have said.*" The word אָמַרְתִּי, "*I have said,*" is used, in the Book of Psalms, to express two things; either a fixed purpose, or a settled opinion of the person speaking. The Psalmist, therefore, delivers the whole of this second verse in his own person, and introduces not God speaking till the next verse.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 2.—"*I have said,*" etc. The perpetuity of mercy is one eminent piece of this psalm, for with that he begins: "*Mercy shall be built up for ever,*" etc. And they are the sure mercies of our spiritual David (Christ), he means. Now, to set forth the perpetuity hereof, he first useth words that express firmitude, as "*established,*" "*built up for ever,*" ver. 2, 4. Then he uses such similitudes as are taken from things which are held most firm and inviolable amongst men, as verse 4, *fœdus incidi*, I have cut or engraven my covenant (so in the Hebrew), alluding to what was then in use, when covenants were mutually to be made, such as they intended to be inviolate, and never to be broken; to signify so much, they did engrave and cut them into the most durable lasting matter, as marble, or brass, or the like. You may see this to have been the way of writing in use, as what was to last for ever: as Job xix. 23, 24. "Oh, that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!" And what is that rock or marble here? No other than the heart itself of our gracious and most merciful Jehovah, and his most unalterable and immovable purposes, truth and faithfulness. This is that foundation "*in the heavens,*" whereon mercy is built up for ever, as ver. 2, which (as the Apostle says) "remains for ever;" and so they become "the sure mercies of David," Isai. lv. 3. Again, solemn oaths amongst men serve to ratify and make things sworn to perpetual. This also is there specified as having been taken by God: "Once have I sworn by my holiness," etc., and sworn by him that cannot lie, and sworn to that end, "to show the immutability of his counsel," Heb. vi. 17. And not only is the immutability of his mercy illustrated by these things taken from what is firm on earth, but he ascends up to the heavens, and first into the very highest heavens: ver. 2, "*For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever; thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens:*" comparing them to an house built not on earth, or upon a foundation of earth, which thieves break through, and violence destroys, but in heaven, whither they cannot reach.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 2.—"*Mercy shall be built up for ever.*" What is this "*mercy*" that is "built up for ever"? but the glorious and the gracious scheme, the glorious

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and the gracious fabric, of our salvation, founded in the eternal purpose of God—carried into execution by the labours and the death of Jesus Christ—and then applied and brought home to the heart by the illuminating and converting power of the Holy Ghost? This is that "mercy" which is "built up for ever." It was planned from everlasting, and will know no ruin or decay, through the illimitable line of eternity itself. Who is the builder of this fabric? Not man's free-will. Not man's own righteousness or wisdom. Not human power nor human skill. Every true believer will here join issue with David, that it is God, and God alone, who builds up the temple of his Church; and who, as the builder of it, is alone entitled to all the glory.

The elect constitute and form one grand house of mercy: an house, erected to display and to perpetuate the riches of the Father's free grace, of the Son's atoning merit, and of the Holy Ghost's efficacious agency. This house, contrary to the fate of all sublunary buildings, will never fall down, nor ever be taken down. As nothing can be added to it, so nothing can be diminished from it. Fire cannot injure it; storms cannot overthrow it; age cannot impair it. It stands on a rock, and is immovable as the rock on which it stands—the three-fold rock of God's inviolable decree, of Christ's finished redemption, and of the Spirit's never-failing faithfulness.—*Augustus Montague Toplady*, 1740—1778.

Verse 2.—"*Built up.*" Mention of a building of mercy, presupposes miserable ruins, and denotes that this building is intended for the benefit of an elect world ruined by Adam's fall. Free grace and love set on foot this building for them, every stone in which, from the lowest to the highest, is mercy to them; from top to bottom, from the foundation-stone to the top-stone, all is free and rich mercy to them. And the ground of this glorious building is God's covenant with his chosen: "*I have made a covenant with my chosen.*"—*Thomas Boston.*

Verse 2.—"*Built up.*" Former mercies are fundamental to later ones. The mercies that we enjoy this day are founded upon the mercies of former days, such as we ought joyfully and thankfully to recount with delight and praise; remembering the years of the right hand of the Most High.—*John Howe.*

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—The meaning of this passage appears to be, that the constancy of the celestial motions, the regular vicissitudes of day and night, and alternations of the seasons, were emblems of God's own immutability.—*R. Warner*, 1828.

Verse 2.—

For I have said, Thy mercies rise,
A deathless structure, to the skies:
The heav'ns were planted by thy hand,
And, as the heav'ns, Thy truth shall stand.

—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 3.—"*I have made a covenant with my chosen.*" We must ponder here with pious wonder how God has deigned to enter into a covenant with man, the immortal with the mortal, the most powerful with the weakest, the most just with the most unjust, the richest with the poorest, the most blessed with the most wretched. The prophet wonders that God is mindful of man, and visits the son of man. Of how much greater admiration, I say, is it worthy, that they are also joined together, and that not after a simple fashion, but by the ties of a covenant? If man had affirmed this of himself, that God was united and bound to him by a covenant, who is there that would not have condemned him of temerity? Now God himself is introduced affirming this very thing of himself, that he had made a covenant with man. What saint does not see in this thing, how great the φιλανθρωπία of God is!—*Musculus.*

Verse 3.—"*I have made a covenant with my chosen.*" On heaven's side is God himself, the party proposer. Though he was the party offended, yet the motion for a covenant comes from him. . . . . The Father of mercies saith,

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"The lost creatures cannot contract for themselves; and if another undertake not for them, they must perish; they cannot choose an undertaker for themselves. I will choose one for them, and I will make a covenant with my chosen." On man's side is God's chosen, or *chosen One*, for the word of God is singular; the Son, *the last Adam*. Who else as fit to be undertaker on man's side? who else could have been the Father's choice for this vast undertaking? No angel nor man was capable of it, but "*the Mighty One*" (verse 19) whom the Father points out to us as his *chosen*, Isai. xiii. 1.—*Thomas Boston.*

Verses 3, 4.—"*I made a covenant with my chosen,*" etc. Do you suppose that this was spoken to David, in his own person only? No, indeed; but to David as the antitype, figure, and forerunner of Jesus Christ. Hence, the Septuagint version renders it, *I have covenanted* τοις εκλεκτοις μου *with my elect people*, or with my chosen ones: *i.e.* with them in Christ, and with Christ in their name. "*I have sworn unto David my servant,*" unto the Messiah, who was typified by David; unto my co-eternal Son, who stipulated to take on himself "the form of a servant"; thy seed, *i.e.* all those whom I have given to thee in the decree of election, all those whom thou shalt live and die to redeem, these "*will I establish for ever,*" so as to render their salvation irreversible and inadmissible: "*and build up thy throne,*" thy mediatorial throne, as King of saints and covenant Head of the elect, "*to all generations*": there shall always be a succession of favoured sinners to be called and sanctified, in consequence of thy fœderal obedience unto death; and every period of time shall recompense thy covenant-sufferings with an increasing revenue of converted souls, until as many as are ordained to eternal life are gathered in.

Observe, here, that when Christ received the promise from the Father concerning the establishment of his (*i.e.* of Christ's) throne to all generations, the plain meaning is, that his people shall be thus established; for, consider Christ in his divine capacity as the Son of God, and his throne was already established, and had been from everlasting, and would have continued to be established without end, even if he had never been incarnate at all. Therefore, the promise imports that Christ shall reign, not simply as a person in the Godhead (which he ever did, ever will, and ever must); but relatively, mediatorially, and in his office-character, as the deliverer and king of Zion. Hence it follows, that his people cannot be lost: for he would be a poor sort of a king who had or might have no subjects to reign over. Consequently, that "throne" of glory on which Christ sits is already encircled in part, and will at last be completely surrounded and made still more glorious, by that innumerable company, that general assembly and church of the first-born who are written in heaven.—*Augustus Montague Toplady.*

Verse 5.—"*The Heavens,*" etc. Now, for this kingdom of his, the heavens are said to praise his wonders, which is spoken of the *angels*, who are often called the heavens, from their place; as in Job it is said, "The heavens are not clean in his sight." And these knowing the wonders of that covenant of grace, they, even they are said to praise; "The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord" In the Hebrew it is "thy wonder," or "thy miracle," in the singular number, which, in Eph. iii. 10, the angels are said to adore: and in Luke i., to "sing glory to the Highest;" for his grace to man is that miracle. Now the material heavens do not praise the mercy of God, or the grace of God, or the covenant of grace, or the throne of grace that is established in the heavens. They understand nothing of Christ; no, they do not so much as materially give occasion to man to praise God for these; and therefore this is meant of the angels; and most interpreters understand the next words of them: "*Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints,*" angels, and the holy ones made perfect, for there the great congregation is. For even in the heavens, who can be compared to the Lord, where all his angels thus do praise him? "*Who among the sons of the mighty*, of all the powers of the earth, "*can be likened unto the Lord?*" for he is the "King of kings, and he is the Lord of lords;" a

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God above all gods, even angels themselves, as elsewhere the psalmist hath it. And he says not only, "*There is none like thee;*" but, "Who is like unto thee?" his excellency so exceeds. And in the 7th verse, he is there presented with all his saints and angels round about him, as one that is greatly to be feared, or that is terrible in himself, by reason of his greatness, in this his council and assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are about him. For saints and angels, they are of his council in heaven (as might be shewn), and encompass the manifestation of his glory there round about.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy wonders,*" etc. As the heavens are a proof of God's power, in respect of his first framing them out of nothing; so are they a pattern of God's faithfulness, in their constant and orderly motion according to his word since their framing: "*The heavens shall praise thy faithfulness also.*" However the power and faithfulness of God may be seen and heard in the work and speech of the heavens by all men, yet are they not observed and hearkened unto except in the Church by God's children: therefore saith he, "*They shall praise thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy wonders.*" Thy wondrousness (*literally*, wonder), not "Thy wondrous works," but "Thy wonderful mysterious nature and being," as separate and distinct from all created beings.—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy wonders,*" etc. It is a wonderful salvation, it is such a salvation as the angels desire to pry into it; and it is such a salvation, that all the prophets desire to pry into it; it is almost six thousand years since all the angels in heaven fell into a sea of wonder at this great salvation; it is almost six thousand years since Abel fell into a sea of wonder at this great salvation; and what think ye is his exercise this day? He is even wondering at this great salvation.—*Andrew Gray*, 1616.

Verse 6.—"*Who in the heaven?*" Who in the sky? Ainsworth reads it. In the clouds, *in nubibus, æquabitur*, is to be equalled, saith Calvin, to Jehovah, *Quis enim in superiore nube par æstimetur Jehova.* Who in the higher clouds is equal to Jehovah, so Tremellius reads it. "*Who in the heavens?*" *i.e.*, say some, in the starry heavens, among the celestial bodies, sun, moon, or stars; which were adored as gods, not only by the Persians, but also by some idolatrous Jews, because of their brightness and beauty, their lustre and glory. Which of all those famous lamps, and heavenly luminaries, is to be compared to the Father of lights, and Sun of righteousness? They may glister like glowworms in the night of Paganism, among them who are covered with the mantle of darkness, but when this Sun ariseth, and day appeareth, they all vanish and disappear.

"*Who in the heavens?*" *i.e.*, say others, in the heaven of heavens, the highest, the third heavens, among the celestial spirits, cherubims and seraphims, angels and archangels, principalities and powers, thrones and dominions? Who among the innumerable company of angels? who among those pure, those perfect spirits, who are the ancientest, the honourablest house of the creation, is to be compared to the Father of Spirits.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 6.—"*Who can be compared?*" The Dutch have translated these words, "*Who can be shadowed with him?*" that is, they are not worthy to be accounted shadows unto such a comparison with him.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 6.—"*Who among the sons of the mighty.*" Literally, "*Who is he among the sons of*" *Alim* (or of Gods, as in Ps. xxix. 1,) *i.e.*, according to Suicer, the powerful, the princes of the earth.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 7.—"*God is greatly to be feared.*" Ainsworth reads, "God is daunting terrible." The original word is נֶעֱרָץ, from עָרַץ *arats, he was broken, bruised, terrified.* "An epithet of God," says Bythner, "as though breaking all things."—*Editorial Note to Calvin in loc.*

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Verse 7.—"*God is greatly to be feared.*" The worship of God is to be performed with great fear and reverence: "*God is greatly to be feared.*" Piscator translates it, *Vehementer formidandus*, to be vehemently feared; and opposes it to that formal, careless, trifling, vain spirit, which too often is found in those that approach the Lord in the duties of his worship.—*John Flavel.*

Verse 7.—"*God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints.*" Those saints of his who walk close with him, have a daunting power in their appearance. I appeal to guilty consciences, to apostates, to professors who have secret haunts of wickedness: sometime when you come but into the presence of one who is a truly gracious godly man or woman whom your conscience tells you walks close with God, doth not even the very sight of such an one terrify you? the very lustre of that holiness you see in such an one strikes upon your conscience. Then you think, such an one walks close with God indeed, but I have basely forsaken the Lord, and have had such a haunt of wickedness, I have brought dreadful guilt upon my soul since I saw him last. Ecclesiastical stories tell us of Basil, when the officers came to apprehend him, he being then exercised in holy duties, that there was such a majesty and lustre came from his countenance, that the officers fell down backward (as they did who came to apprehend Christ), they were not able to lay hold of him. Surely, when the saints shall be raised in their holiness, when every one of them shall have their hearts filled with holiness, it will cause abundance of fear even in all hearts of those that converse with them.—*Jeremiah Burrows.*

Verse 8.—"*Thy faithfulness round about thee.*" For just as the tyrants of this world move abroad surrounded by impiety, avarice, contempt of God, and pride, as with a body-guard, so God sits on his exalted throne, surrounded with majesty, faithfulness, mercy and equal love to all his people, as with a vesture of gold.—*J. Baptista Folengius.*

Verse 8.—"*Thy faithfulness round about thee.*" Whatever he doth, he is mindful of his faithfulness and covenant, before and behind, and on each side; he can look no way, but that is in his eye. And though he employ angels, and send them down into the world, and they stand round about him; yet he hath better harbingers than these—mercy, and truth, and faithfulness, that wait round about him.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 9.—"*Thou rulest the raging of the sea.*" Surely the Spirit of God would have us to take notice, that though the sea be indeed such a giant, such a monster, as will make a heart of oak shake, or a heart of brass melt, yet what is it to God, but an infant? he can bind it and lay it to sleep, even as a little child. And if the great sea be in the hand of God as a little child, what is great to God! and how great is God! What is strong to God! and how strong is God! What or who is too great, or too strong for God to deal with?—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 9.—"*Thou rulest.*" Here under a figure taken from God's providential government, we have an exhibition of the power of God in defeating the efforts of the enemies of his Church. An instance of this, in the literal sense, we have in the appeasing of the storm by our Lord. "And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Here we see that God reigns over the sea immediately, and alters or modifies the arrangements of nature according to his sovereign pleasure. That which Jesus did on one occasion is constantly done by the God of providence. He has not left the ocean to be disturbed at random by the winds, nor to be kept in peace by the laws of nature. He rules the raging of the sea. He raises the waves, and he stilleth them. This exhibits a continually working providence. And what he does in providence he does also in his kingdom of grace. He suffers the fury of the enemy to swell against his cause, but he stills it at his pleasure.—*Alexander Carson.*

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Verse 10.—"*Broken;*" "*scattered.*" God has more ways than one to deal with his and his church's enemies.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 10.—"*Rahab.*" The reason why *Egypt* is expressed in Scripture under this word, ariseth from the two significations of it; first, it signifies *strength*, for Egypt was a very strong nation, and therefore the Israelites were reproved for going to them for help, and relying upon their strength, which though great in itself, yet should be to them but a broken reed; secondly, it signifieth *pride*, or *the proud;* men are usually proud of strength, and *Egypt* being a strong nation, was also a very proud nation.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 11.—"*The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine.*" Therefore we praise thee, therefore we trust in thee. therefore we will not fear what man can do against us.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 12.—"*The north and the south thou hast created them.*" etc. The heights of Huttin, commonly fixed on by tradition as the Mount of Beatitudes, appear a little to the west of Tiberias. Over these the graceful top of Mount Tabor is seen, and beyond it the little Hermon, famous for its dews; and still farther, and apparently higher, the bleak mountains of Gilboa, on which David prayed that there might fall no dew nor rain. A view of the position of Tabor and Hermon from such a situation as that which we now occupied, shewed us how accurately they might be reckoned the "*umbilicus terræ*"—the central point of the land, and led us to infer that this is the true explanation of the manner in which they are referred to in the 89th Psalm, 12th verse. It is as if the psalmist had said North, South, and *all that is between*—or in other words, the whole land from North to South, to its very centre and throughout its very marrow—shall rejoice in thy name.—*R. M. McCheyne.*

Verse 12.—"*Tabor and Hermon.*" These hills, the one to the east and the other to the west, in Canaan, were much frequented by the saints of God. David speaks of the sacred hill of *Hermon*, and compares brotherly-love to the dew of it. Psa. xlii. 6; cxxxiii. 3. And *Tabor*, yet more eminent for the memorable spot of Christ's transfiguration, and from whence God the Father proclaimed his perfect love and approbation of Jesus as his dear Son. Well might this hymn, therefore, in allusion to those glorious events, call even the holy hills to rejoice in Jehovah's name, Matt. xvii. 1—5.—*Robert Hawker.*

Verse 13.—"*Strong is thy hand*"; even thy left hand; as much as to say, *tu polles utraque manu*, thou hast both hands alike powerful.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 14.— "*Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.*" As if the Psalmist had said, "The ornaments with which God is invested, instead of being a robe of purple, a diadem, or a sceptre, are, that he is the righteous and impartial judge of the world, a merciful father, and a faithful protector of his people." Earthly kings, from their having nothing in themselves to procure for them authority, and to give them dignity, are under the necessity of borrowing elsewhere what will invest them therewith; but God, having in himself all-sufficiency, and standing in no need of any other helps, exhibits to us the splendour of his own image in his righteousness, mercy, and truth.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 14.—"*Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.*" The Holy Ghost alludeth to the thrones of earthly princes, which were underpropped with pillars, as Solomon's throne with lions, 1 Kings xix. 20, that were both a support and an ornament to it. Now, saith the psalmist, justice and judgment are the pillars upon which God's throne standeth, as Calvin expoundeth it, the robe and diadem, the purple and sceptre, the regalia with which God's throne is adorned.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 14.—"*Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.*" Jehovah is here exhibited, by the sacred poet, under the character of a Sovereign, and of a Judge, he being presented to our adoring regard as on his *throne;* the throne

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of universal empire, and absolute dominion; as exercising his authority, and executing his laws, with an omnipotent but impartial hand. For "Justice and judgment are the *habitation*," the *preparation*, the *establishment*, or the *basis*, of this throne. Our textual translation is, *habitation;* the marginal, *establishment;* the Septuagint, *preparation;* and, if I mistake not, our best modern interpreters render the original term, *basis* or *foundation;* which, on the whole, seems most agreeable. The *basis*, then, of Jehovah's government, or that on which it rests, is "*justice and judgment.*" By "*justice*," I conceive we are to understand the attribute so called; and, by "*judgment*," the impartial exercise of that attribute in the Divine administration. So that were not the Most High to administer impartial justice in his moral government, he might be considered, if it be lawful to use the expression, as abdicating his throne.—*Abraham Booth*, 1734—1806.

Verse 14.—"*Justice*," which defends his subjects, and does every one right. "*Judgment*," which restrains rebels, and keeps off injuries. "*Mercy*," which shows compassion, pardons, supports the weak. "*Truth*," that performs whatsoever he promiseth.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 14.—"*Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.*" Note 1. Mercy is said to go before the face of God, because God sends mercy before judgment, that he might find less to punish: so Bellarmine. 2. That God permits not his face to be seen before He has forgiven our sins through mercy: so Rickelius. 3. That no one comes to the knowledge of God, but he who has obtained mercy beforehand. 4. That God comes to no one unless His grace go before Him. . . . . Truth goes before the face of God, because God keeps it ever before his eyes, to mould his actions thereby. Pindar calls truth θυγατερα Διος the daughter of God. Epaminondas the Theban general, cultivated truth so studiously, that he is reported never to have spoken a falsehood even in jest. In the courts of kings this is a rare virtue.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 14.—"*Mercy and truth.*" *Mercy* in promising; *truth* in performing. *Truth*, in being as good as thy word; *mercy*, in being better.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 14.—"*Shall go.*" In his *active going forth*, tender mercy and goodness announce him, and faithful truth will tell his people he is there when he comes forth. His activi ies are mercy and faithfulness, because his will is at work and his nature is love. Yet his throne still maintains justice and judgment.—*J. N. Darby.*

Verse 15.—"*Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.*" Not that *hear*, for then the blessing were cheap indeed. Thousands *hear* the Gospel sound, but sometimes not ten of a thousand know it.—*Thomas James Judkin*, 1841.

Verse 15.—"*Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound*"—viz., of the trumpets sounded in token of joy at the great festivals, and chiefly on the first day of the seventh month, the feast of trumpets (Lev. xxiii. 24), and on extraordinary occasions, especially after the yearly atonement, on the day of jubilee, the tenth day of the seventh month of the fiftieth year, proclaiming liberty to bondmen, and restoration of their inheritance to them that had forfeited it (Lev. xxv. 8—10). As the jubilee joy did not come till after the atonement, so no Gospel joy and liberty are ours till first we know Christ as our atonement. "In the day of the people's gladness" they blew the trumpets over their sacrifices, "that they might be to them for a memorial before God" (Num. x. 10). David and Israel brought up the ark of the Lord to Zion "with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet" (2 Sam. vi. 15). In Num. xxiii. 21, Balaam makes it the distinguishing glory of Israel, "The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them," (Compare Ps. xcviii. 6; xxvii. 6. *margin*).—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 15.—"*People that know the joyful sound.*" Here it is supposed that we have intelligence in respect of "*the joyful sound.*" For there is knowledge not merely of the utterances and intonations, but of the sense and substance, of the thought and feeling, which they convey. And I suppose this to be the

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meaning of Christ when he says, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me; and a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." And I have often been surprised, to note the accuracy with which persons otherwise not very intelligent, not largely informed, not of critical acumen, will yet, when they hear a discourse, judge, discriminate, determine; will be able to say at once—"Truth, clear, unmixed, without a cloud upon it;" or—"Doctrine clouded, statements confused, not the lucid Gospel;" or be able to say, if it be so—"No Gospel at all; contradiction to the truth of Christ." They "*Know the joyful sound,*" as it rolls from the plenitude of God's own voice and bosom, in his august and blessed revelations; as it is confirmed, authenticated and sealed by the precious blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; as it is witnessed to by the eternal Spirit: "the joyful sound," that there is salvation for lost and ruined men by faith in the blood and in the obedience of him who died upon the tree, and is now enthroned in the highest place in heaven.—*James Stratten*, 1845.

Verse 15.—"*They shall walk in the light of thy countenance.*" Surely, next to the love of God's heart, believers value the smiles of his face; from which, as from the agency of the sun, arise the buddings of conscious joy, the leaves of unsullied profession, the variegated blossom of holy tempers, and the beneficent fruits of moral righteousness. They are totally mistaken who suppose that "*the light of God's countenance,*" and the privileges of the gospel, and the comforts of the Spirit, conduce to make us indolent and unactive in the way of duty. The text cuts up this surmise by the roots. For, it does not say, they shall *sit down* in the light of thy countenance; or, they shall *lie down* in the light of thy countenance; but "*they shall* WALK in the light of thy countenance." What is walking? It is a progressive motion from one point of space to another. And what is that holy walking which God's Spirit enables all his people to observe? It is a continued, progressive motion from sin to holiness; from all that is evil, to every good word and work. And the salf-same "light of God's countenance" in which you, O believer, are enabled to walk, and which at first gave you spiritual feet wherewith to walk, will keep you in a walking and in a working state, to the end of your warfare.—*Augustus Montague Toplady.*

Verse 15.—There is the dreadful and there is the joyful sound. The dreadful sound was at Mount Sinai. The joyful sound is from Mount Sion. When the people heard the former they were far from beholding the glory of God's face. Moses only was admitted to see His "back-parts;" the people were kept at a distance, and the light of God's glory that they saw was so terrible to them, that they could not abide it. But they that know the "joyful sound," they shall be admitted near, nearer than Moses, so as to see the glory of God's face or brightness of his countenance, and that not only transiently, as Moses saw God's back-parts, but continually. The light of God's glory shall not be terrible to them, but easy and sweet, so that they may dwell in it and walk in it; and it shall be to them instead of the light of the sun; for the sun shall no more be their light by day, nor the moon by night, but God shall be their everlasting light. Compare this with Isa. ii. 5, and Rev. xxi. 23, 24. and xxii. 4, 5.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verse 16.—"*And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*" In these words briefly we may notice, 1. The believer's promotion; he is "*exalted.*" In the first Adam we were debased unto the lowest hell, the crown having fallen from our heads; but in Christ, the second Adam, we are again exalted; yea, exalted as high as heaven, for we "sit together with him in heavenly places," says the apostle. This is an incredible paradox to a blind world, that the believer who is sitting at this moment upon the dunghill of this earth, should at the same time be sitting in heaven in Christ, his glorious Head and representative, Eph. ii. 6. 2. We have the ground of the believer's preferment and exaltation; it is "*in thy righteousness.*" It is not in any righteousness of his own; no, this

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he utterly disclaims, reckoning it but "dung and loss," "filthy rags," dogs' meat: but it is in *thy* righteousness; that is, the righteousness of God, as the apostle calls it: Rom. i. 17 Phil. iii. 9. The righteousness of God is variously taken in Scripture. Sometimes for the infinite rectitude and equity of his nature: Ps. xi. 7, "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." Sometimes for his rectoral equity, or distributive justice which he exerciseth in the government of the world, rewarding the good and punishing evil-doers: Ps. xcvii. 2, "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Sometimes it is put for his veracity and faithfulness in accomplishing his word of promise, or in executing his word of threatening: Ps. xxxvi. 5, 6, "Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds: thy righteousness is like the great mountains." Sometimes it is put for the perfect righteousness which Christ the Son of God, as our Surety and Mediator, brought in, by his obedience to the law, and death on the cross, for the justification of guilty sinners: and this as I said, is frequently called the righteousness of God; and in this sense I understand it here in the text: "*In thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*"—*Ebenezer Erskine.*

Verse 17.—"*In thy favour our horn shall be exalted.*" A man of lofty bearing is said to carry his horn very high. To him who is proudly interfering with the affairs of another it will be said, "Why show your *kombu*," "horn," "here?" "See that fellow, what a fine horn he has; he will make the people run." "Truly, my lord, you have a great horn." "Chinnan has lost his money; ay, and his hornship too." "Alas, alas! I am like the deer, whose horns have fallen off."—*Joseph Roberts'* "*Oriental Illustrations.*"

Verse 19 (*second clause*).—[New Translation] "*A mighty chief have I supplied with help.*" Literally, "I have equalized help," that is, I have laid or given sufficient help, "upon a mighty one." The verb denotes "to equalize," or "make one thing equal or equiponderant to another," as a means to the end, or vice versa.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 19.—"*Chosen*" has here its strict sense, but not without allusion to its specific use as signifying a young warrior.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 20.—"*With my holy oil have I anointed him.*" As the literal David was thrice anointed king, once by Samuel in Jesse's house at Bethlehem; once at Hebron after the death of Saul, as king over Judah; and again at seven years' end, as ruler over all Israel: so also "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power" in his nativity at Bethlehem; a second time over his Church at his resurrection, when the tyrant who sought his life was overcome, and then only over the small "confederation" (which *Hebron* means) of his Jewish disciples; but a third time in his ascension to the heavenly Jerusalem, the Vision of Peace, where he, now crowned as King of Glory, was anointed over all heaven and earth, supreme over all the princes of God. He was thrice anointed in another sense also, once as Prophet, once as Priest, and once as King.—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verses 20—24.—"*I have* FOUND *David*," God exclaims. When sin brought death into the world, and annihilated the hopes of mankind from the first covenant, *I*—the Almighty—in my care for them, *sought out* a Redeemer. I sought for him in the Divine Nature; and I "*found*" him in My Only Son. I endowed him with ample powers, and I covenanted that, in the weakness of his Incarnation, "*my hand*" and "*arm*" should "*strengthen*" him. I declared that Satan "*the enemy*" should "*not exact upon him;*" nor should Judas—"the son of wickedness"—be enabled to "*afflict him.*" The Jews, "*his foes,*" shall fall before him; they shall be "*smitten down*" in their rejection of him; they shall perish from off their land, and be dispersed abroad among the nations. My "*truth*" shall be ever with him; and acting in my "*name*" and power, he shall be exalted and glorified amongst men.—*William Hill Tucker.*

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Verse 22.—"*The enemy shall not exact upon him.*" The allusion appears to us to be made to a cruel and unjust creditor, who exacts not only his just debts, but some exaggerated demand, with usurious interest, which was not permitted.—*Williams, quoted by Ed. of Calvin.*

Verse 25.—"*I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.*" That is, he should reign from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates: figuratively expressed by his left hand being extended to the sea, and his right hand to the rivers. A similar expression is used, according to Curtius, by the Scythian ambassadors to Alexander. "If," said they, "the gods had given thee a body as great as thy mind, the whole world would not be able to contain thee. Thou wouldst reach with one hand to the east, and with the other to the west." —*Kitto's Pictorial Bible.*

Verse 25.—"*I will set his hand also in the sea and his right hand in the rivers.*" A certain artist was in the habit of saying that he should represent Alexander in such a manner, that in one hand he should hold a city and from the other pour a river. Christ is represented here as of immense stature, higher than all mountains, with one hand holding the earth, and the other the sea, while from Eastern sea to Western he extends his arms.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 26.—"*He shall cry unto me, thou art my father.*" When did David call God his Father? It is striking that we do not find anywhere in the Old Testament that the patriarchs or prophets called God their Father. You do not find them addressing Him as Father: they did not know him as such. This verse is unintelligible in reference to David; but in regard to the True David it is exactly what he did say,—"My Father, and your Father; my God, and your God." Never until Christ uttered these words, never until he appeared on earth in humanity as the Son of God, did any man or any child of humanity address God in this endearing character. It was after Christ said, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father," that believers were enabled to look up to God and to say, "Abba, Father." Here you see distinctly that this applies to Christ. He was the first to say this: David did not say it. If there were no other proof in the whole psalm, that one clause would be a demonstration to me that no other man than the Lord Jesus Christ can be here spoken of.—*Capel Molyneux*, 1855

Verse 26.—"*My Father.*" Christ commenced his labours by referring to his Father, for in Luke ii. he says, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" and his last words were, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;" and through his whole life he most constantly addressed God as his Father. "*He shall cry unto me: Thou art my Father,*" as far as my divinity is concerned. "*My God,*" as far as my humanity is concerned; "*the support of my salvation,*" as regards my mortality.—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 26—28. Christ had a command to be a sufferer, and a body prepared him for that purpose; so he had likewise a command to be an advocate, and a life given him, and a throne prepared for him at the right hand of God to that end. This commission is contained in the words before us; and this after his exaltation, ver. 24, 25. Yet for the full completing of it, ver. 27, the matter of the plea is here mentioned, "*Thou art the rock of my salvation,*" the foundation, the first cause, of all thy salvation I have wrought in the world, being the first mover of it, and promising the acceptance of me in the performance of what was necessary for it. As he hath authority to cry to God, so he hath an assurance of the prevalency of his cry, in regard of the stability of the covenant of mediation, which shall stand fast with him, or be faithful to him: "*my mercy will I keep for him for evermore,*" ver. 28. The treasures of my mercy are reserved only to be opened and dispensed by him; and the enjoying of his spiritual seed for ever, and the establishing of his own throne thereby, is the promised fruit of this cry, ver. 28.—*Stephen Charnock.*

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Verse 27.—"*I will make him my first-born.*" First, because he is first in the order of predestination; for it is through him, as through the head, that we are predestinated, as we read in Ephes. i. Secondly, because he is first in the second generation to life everlasting, whence he is called (Colos. i.) "*the first-born from the dead*"; and in Rev. i., "*the first-begotten of the dead*"; and, thirdly, because he had the rights of the first-born; for "*he was appointed heir of all things*"; and he was made not only first-born, but also, "*high above the kings of the earth*"; that is, Prince of the kings of the earth, and King of kings.—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 27.—"*Also I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.*" This promise plainly implies superiority of a nature similar to what was enjoyed of old by the eldest son of a family—the birth-right privileges and blessings, which consisted principally in three important particulars: First, A double portion of the parent's earthly possessions, Deut. xxi. 17. Secondly, Rule or authority over the younger branches of the family, 2 Chron. xxi. 3; and Thirdly, The exercise of the priesthood, because God claimed all the first-born as his, and in their stead he appointed the Levites to do the priest's office, Numb. viii. 14—17. But, whilst it is literally true that Jesus was the first-born son of his virgin mother, and on that account entitled to the customary privileges, the promise in the 89th psalm gives intimation of something specific and unusual. David was the youngest son of Jesse, the lowest on the list of a numerous family,—the very last individual among them who could have expected exaltation over all others. But, notwithstanding these natural disadvantages, he was God's choice; and by referring to the Scripture history it would be easy to show, in a variety of particulars, how the promise made to David, "*I will make him my first-born,*" was literally and remarkably fulfilled in the son of Jesse. In like manner Jesse, to all human appearance, entering the world as heir-apparent only to the poverty of Mary and her espoused husband, was far removed from every prospect of realizing that combination of royal and sacerdotal prerogative, which nevertheless was made sure to him by the promise of his heavenly Father: "I will make him *my* first-born." The pronoun "*my*" gives great emphasis to the promise, but this word is interpolated; and however truly it conveys an idea of the unspeakable superiority which belongs to Jesus Christ as the result of his relationship with God, still we shall find that, even without this important pronoun, the promise simply of being "*first-born*" has a sublimity and grandeur about it which needs neither ornament nor addition. The great Jehovah, the Maker and the Owner and the Ruler of the universe, hath said respecting his Christ, "I will make him my first-born"; that is, I will constitute him the chief of all creatures, and the depository of all power, and the possessor of all privileges, and the heir of all creation. By way of excellence, *he* is *the* first-born, "higher than all the kings of the earth,"—enjoying priority in point of time, and precedence in point of place.—*David Pitcairn, in "The Anointed Saviour,"* 1846.

Verse 27.—"*My firstborn.*" In the Hebrew idiom all kings were *the sons of God:* but David is the chief of these, God's *firstborn.* The Greeks had a similar mode of expressing themselves. Kings were the nurslings of Jupiter.—*Alexander Geddes.*

Verse 28.—"*My mercy will I keep for him for evermore.*" How will he keep his mercy for Christ for evermore? Very simply, I think. Is not Christ the Fountain of all mercy to us? Is it not the mercy of God the Father flowing to us through Christ that we enjoy? Is he not the Depository of it all? God says, then, I will keep it for him; for ever and ever shall it be lodged in Christ, and his people shall enjoy it throughout eternity.—*Capel Molyneux.*

Verses 28—30.—Here is comfort to those who are true branches, and continue to bring forth fruit in the midst of all the trials that befall them, that God will not suffer them to be cut off by their corruption. If anything in them should provoke God to do it, it must be sin. Now for that, you see how Christ

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promiseth that God will take order therewith, and will purge it out of them. This is the covenant made with David, (as he was a type of Christ, with whom the same covenant is made sure and firm,) that "*if his seed forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments*,"—What! presently turn them out of doors, and cut them off, as those he meant to have no more to do with? What! nothing but utter rejection? Is there no means of reclaiming them? Never a rod in the house? Yes—"*then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes*," whip out their stubbornness and sinfulness; "*but my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him*" as I did from Saul, as it is in 1 Chron. xvii. 13.

Let the saints consider this, that they may return when they are fallen, and submit to him and his nature, and suffer him to do what he will with them, and endure cutting, and lancing, and burning, so long as he cuts them not off; endure chastening, and all his dealings else, knowing that all the fruit is but to take away the sin, to make them "partakers of his holiness;" and "if by any means," as Paul speaks of himself, (Phil. iii. 11,) be the means what it will, it is no matter. And God, if at any time he seems to cut thee off, yet it is but as the incestuous Corinthian was cut off, that 'the flesh might be destroyed, and the spirit saved.'—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 29.—"*His seed*" and "*throne*" are coupled together, as if his *throne* could not stand if his *seed* did fail. If his subjects should perish, what would he be king of? If his members should consume, what would he be head of?—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 30.—"*If his children forsake my law.*" An objection is supposed: 'Suppose this seed who are included in the covenant fall into transgression, how shall the covenant stand fast then?' The covenant, with the seed, shall stand for ever, but the seed must be a holy seed. Then the objector supposes—'Suppose the seed become unholy?' Well, God explains—"If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments"—that is, if the seed practically fall away—"If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." Mark the case. What is it that God will do? The case supposed is that the seed of Christ forsakes the law and breaks his statutes. I need not say to you that that is realized every day. These are not the ungodly or the unconverted that are spoken of, but God's own children. Do you say, 'Can they be guilty of breaking God's statutes, and forsaking God's law?' We do it every day. There is no single day of our lives that we do not do it. . . . .

How astonished many would be, if they knew what the real case was of those perhaps whom they admire, and think highly advanced and exalted in the Divine life, if they were to know the falls, the wretched falls, falls in heart, in word and in practice; if they were to know the deep distress that the children of God, who are far advanced as they suppose in the Divine life, are continually suffering from the effect of such transgression! That is exactly what God says; he comes and contemplates such a case, and he says, "If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then"—what? What will God do? Some people say, "Then God will leave them." Those who object to the doctrine of final perseverance say this: "It is true he will preserve the believer from the toils of the Devil and the temptations of the world, but not from the breaking forth of his own natural evil. He may be betrayed by that, and finally lost. God exactly meets that case; he contemplates the worst case—actual transgression. He says, "If a child of mine breaks my law." He does not say anything about the Devil, or the outward temptations of the world; but he says, "If they forsake my law and break my statutes." Let us be instructed by God. He does not say he will leave them and forsake them. Mark what he will do! He

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say—"I will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." That is the provision which God has made in his covenant: and it is delightful to see how God has contemplated our case to the uttermost. There is nothing in our history that God has not met in the covenant with Christ. If you are in union with Christ, and a partaker of the covenant, your case is met in every conceivable emergency. Nothing can befall you which is not contemplated—nothing which God has not provided for. Even if you fall, God has provided for it; but take heed; the provision involves much that will be terrible and desperately painful to your mind. There is nothing to encourage sin about it; there is nothing to give us license, nothing to lead a man to boast, "I am safe at last." Be it so: but safe how? How will God secure their safety? "I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes."—*Capel Molyneux.*

Verse 30.—"*If his children forsake my law.*" If they fall into sins of commission; if they shoot beyond the mark. "*And walk not in my judgments.*" If they fall into sins of omission, and shoot short. Where note that "*every transgression and dis-obedience* (that is, every commission and omission) *receiveth a just recompense of reward,*" Heb. ii. 2.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 30.—"*His children.*" בָּנָיו, *his sons, i. e.* Christians, born through the griefs of Christ on the cross, like the pangs of one in travail.—*Geier.*

Verse 30.—A man may forsake the doctrines of the Gospel. He may fall into great errors, great aberrations from Truth; he may forsake the ordinances of the Lord's house, though he sees God's word is clear upon the point. He esteems those things as nothing worth, which the Lord esteems so well, that he has given them to his church as a sacred deposit, which she is to convey down to the last posterity till time shall be no more. And what is still more—a man may forsake for a time the principles of the precious Gospel of the living God. But I can imagine a state still more solemnly affecting than even this. It is a part of God's wisdom, (and it is for our good that it is so—all God's wisdom is for his people's good)—it is a part of the wisdom of God, that sin should lead to sin; that one neglect shall pave the way to another; that that which is bad shall lead to that which is worse, and that which is worse shall prepare the way for that which is worst. . . . . The longer I live, the more I am brought to this—to know that there is not a sin that ever was committed, but I need the grace of God to keep me from it.—*James Harrington Evans.*

Verses 30—34.—God here says two things; first, that he will chastise them, next, that he will not, on that account, cast them out of his covenant. O wonderful tempering of the kindness and severity of God! in which he finds his own glory, and believers their safety! The heavenly Father loves the blood and marks of his Christ which he sees upon them, and the remains of faith and godliness which are preserved hidden in the depth of their heart; this is why he will not cast them off. On the other hand, he considers that it accords neither with his wisdom nor his holiness to bestow his grace and salvation upon those who do not repent for having cast off his law and given themselves up to iniquity. In order to harmonize these opposite desires, he takes the rod, and chastises them, to arouse their conscience, and to excite their faith; to restore them, by the repentance which his discipline produces, to such a state, as that he may be able to bestow upon them, without shame, the blessings he has promised to the children of his Son; just as a wise parent, by moderate and judicious correction gradually draws back his son from those irregularities of life into which he has plunged; and thereby preserves his honour, and himself the pleasure of being able to love and please him without misgiving. Or, as a skilful surgeon, by the pain which his knife, or cautery, or bitter potions, cause his patient, saves his life, and wards off death.—*Jean Daillé.*

Verses 30—34.—When our heavenly Father is, as it were, forced to put forth his anger, he then makes use of a father's rod, not an executioner's axe. He will neither break his children's bones, nor his own covenant. He lashes in love, in measure, in pity, and compassion.—*Thomas Lye*, 1621—1684.

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Verse 32.—"*Then will I visit their transgression with the rod,*" etc. He does not simply say, I will smite them; but, I will visit with the rod. It is one thing merely to smite, it is another thing to smite by visiting. For visitation implies oversight and paternal care. The metaphor is taken from those who undertake to watch over the sick, or train up children, or tend sheep. He does not say, I will visit *them* with the rod; but, I will visit *their transgression* with the rod. We ought to think perpetually, what it is the rod of God visits in us, that we may confess our transgressions, and amend our lives.—*Musculus.*

Verse 33.—"*Nevertheless my lovingkindness,*" etc. Except the covenant of grace had this article in it for remission of sin and for fatherly correction, to drive unto repentance, that the penitent person coming to God by faith might have sin forgiven him and lovingkindness shown to him; this covenant should fail us no less than the covenant of works.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 33.—"*I will not utterly take from him.*" Why "from *him*"? Because all God's lovingkindness to his people is centred in Christ. Does God love you? it is because he loves Christ; you are one with Christ. Your transgressions are your own; they are separate from Christ; but God's love is not your own; it is Christ's: you receive it because you are one with him. How beautifully that is distinguished here—"If they transgress, I will punish *them;* but my lovingkindness will I not take from *him*"—in whom alone they find it; and in union with whom alone they enjoy it.—*Capel Molyneux.*

Verse 33.—"*From him.*" The words, "*Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him,*" are worthy of consideration; for the question being about those who are chastised, it would appear that he should have written, from *them*, and not from *him*. But the prophet has thus worded it, because, being the children and members of his Christ, the favours which God bestows upon us belong to him in some manner; and it seems that the psalmist wishes to show us hereby, that it is in Jesus Christ, and for love of him alone, that God bestows favours on us. And that which follows, in the 34th verse, agrees herewith,—"*My covenant will I not break*"—for it is properly to Jesus Christ, on account of his admirable obedience, that God the Father has promised to be merciful to our iniquities, and never to leave one of those to perish who are in covenant with him.—*Jean Daillé.*

Verse 33.—"*Nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.*" Man's faith may fail him sometimes, but God's faithfulness never fails him: *God will not suffer his faithfulness to fail.* God's operations may have an aspect that way; the devil's temptations, and our unbelieving hearts, may not only make us think so, but persuade us it is so, whereas it cannot be so, for the Lord will not suffer it, he will not make a lie in his truth or faithfulness; so the Hebrew is: he is a God that cannot lie, he is Truth, speaks truth, and not one of his promises can or shall fail; which may afford strong consolation unto all that are under any promise of God.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 34.—"*My covenant will I not break.*" He had said above, "*If the children of David break my statutes;*" and now, alluding to that breach, he declares that he will not requite them as they requite him, "*My covenant will I not break,*" implying, that although his people may not altogether act in a manner corresponding to their vocation, as they ought to do, he will not suffer his covenant to be broken and disannulled on account of their fault, because he will promptly and effectually prevent this in the way of blotting out their sins by a gratuitous pardon.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 35.—"*Once have I sworn by my holiness.*" He lays here his holiness to pledge for the assurance of his promise, as the attribute most dear to him, most valued by him, as though no other could give an assurance parallel to it, in this concern of an everlasting redemption, which is there spoken of. He

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that swears, swears by a greater than himself. God having no greater than himself, swears by himself; and swearing here by his holiness seems to equal that single to all his other attributes, as if he were more concerned in the honour of it than of all the rest. It is as if he should have said, Since I have not a more excellent perfection to swear by than that of my holiness, I lay this to pawn for your security, and bind myself by that which I will never part with, were it possible for me to be stripped of all the rest. It is a tacit imprecation of himself, If I lie unto David, let me never be counted holy, or thought righteous enough to be trusted by angels or men. This attribute he makes most of.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 36.—"*His seed shall endure for ever.*" They shall continue for ever in three senses. *First.* In the succession of their race to the end of the world. It will never be cut off.—"The Church is in danger!" *What* Church? "Upon this rock," says he, "I will build *my* Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Yea, his people shall continue to increase in number and excellency. We shall leave the world better than we entered it: and so will our *children;* till Jerusalem shall be established, and be made a praise in the whole earth. *Secondly.* In their religious character to the end of their own life. If left to themselves, we could not be sure of their persevering to the end of a day or an hour. But they are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. He upholdeth them with his hand. They shall hold on their way. In all their dangers they shall be more than conquerors. *Thirdly.* In their glorified state, through eternal ages. The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. All other greatness is only for life: it is frequently less durable—at death it *ends.* But *then,* the Christian's greatness—I will not say, begins; for it began the moment he prayed—but then it continues, increases, and is perfected.—*William Jay.*

Verse 37.—"*It shall be established for ever as the moon.*" This clause Kimchi expounds not only of the perpetuity, but of the quality and condition of David's Kingdom, after this fashion: If his children be good, they shall be like the moon, when full and shining; if bad, like the moon waning and obscure. Nevertheless the kingdom itself shall not cease, just as the moon does not go out of existence, whilst it is obscure, but lasts perpetually.—*Musculus.*

Verse 37.—"*And as a faithful witness in heaven.*" [New Translation] "*And as the rainbow's faithful sign.*" The rainbow is not expressly mentioned in the original, which speaks only of "the faithful witness in heaven." Some commentators understand the "witness" thus mentioned to be no other than the moon itself. I prefer, however, the interpretation that fixes it on the rainbow, which God after the deluge appointed as a "sign" or "witness" of his mercy in Christ. Gen. ix. 12—17. Conformably to this appointment, the Jews, when they behold the rainbow, are said to bless God, who remembers his covenant and is faithful to his promise. And the tradition of this its designation to proclaim comfort to mankind was strong among the heathens: for, according to the mythology of the Greeks, the "rainbow" was the daughter of "wonder," "a sign to mortal men," and regarded, upon its appearance, as a messenger of the celestial deities. Thus Homer with remarkable conformity to the Scripture account speaks of the "rainbow," which "Jove hath set in the cloud, a sign to men."—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 38.—"*But thou hast cast off,*" etc. The complainings of the saints meanwhile are so exaggerated, that carnal feeling makes itself more apparent in them, than faith . . . . Yet such is the goodness of God, He is not offended with these complaints, provided faith is not altogether extinguished, or succumbs.—*Mollerus.*

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Verse 39.—"*Thou hast profaned his crown,*" etc. The *crown* of a king, (like that of the high priest, on which was inscribed "holiness to the Lord") (Exod. xxviii. 36) was a sacred thing, and therefore to cast it in the dust was to *profane* it.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 40.—"*Hedges*" and "*strong holds.*" Both of these may refer to the appointments of a vineyard in which the king was the vine. It was usually fenced around with a stone wall, and in it was a small house or tower, wherein a keeper was set to keep away intruders. When the wall, or hedge, was thrown down, every passer by plucked at the fruit, and when the tower was gone the vineyard was left open to the neighbours who could do as they would with the vines. When the church is no longer separated from the world, and her divine Keeper has no more a dwelling-place within her, her plight is wretched indeed. —*C. H. S.*

Verse 43.—"*Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword,*" etc. The arms and military prowess of thy people are no longer of any use to them; THOU art *against* them, and therefore they are fallen. In what a perilous and hopeless situation must that soldier be who, defending his life against his mortal foe, has his sword *broken*, or its *edge turned;* or, in modern warfare, whose *gun misses fire!* The *Gauls*, when invaded by the Romans, had no method of *hardening iron;* at every blow their swords *bended*, so that they were obliged, before they could strike again, to put them under their foot or over their knee, to straighten them; and in most cases, before this could be done, their better armed foe had taken away their life! The edge of their sword was turned, so that they could not stand in battle; and hence the *Gauls* were conquered by the Romans.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 43.—"*Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword,*" that it cannot do execution as it has done; and what is worse, thou hast "turned the edge" of his spirit, and taken off his courage, and hast not made him "*to stand,*" as he used to do, "*in the day of battle.*" The spirit of men is what the Father and Former of spirits makes them; nor can we stand with any strength or resolution, farther than God is pleased to uphold us. If men's hearts fail them, it is God that dispirits them; but it is sad with the church when those cannot stand that should stand up for it.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 45.—"*The days of his youth hast thou shortened.*" Our kings have not reigned half their days, nor lived out half their lives. The *four* last kings of Judea reigned but a short time, and either died by the sword or in captivity. *Jehoahaz* reigned only *three months*, and was led captive to Egypt, where he *died*. *Jehoiakim* reigned only *eleven years*, and was tributary to the Chaldeans, who *put him to death*, and cast his body into the common sewer. *Jehoiachim* reigned *three months and ten days*, and was led *captive* to Babylon, where he continued in prison to the time of Evil-merodach, who, though he loosed him from prison, never invested him with any power. *Zedekiah*, the last of all, had reigned only *eleven years* when he was taken, *his eyes put out*, was *loaded with chains*, and thus carried to Babylon. Most of these kings died a violent and *premature* death. Thus the "*days of their youth*"—of their power, dignity, and life, "*were shortened,*" and they themselves "*covered with shame.*" "*Selah;*" so it most incontestably is.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 45.—"*Thou hast covered him with shame. Selah.*" Thou hast wrapped him up in the winding-sheet of shame. Lord, this is true.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 46, 47.—This undoubtedly sounds like the voice of one who knows no hereafter. The psalmist speaks as if all his hopes were bound by the grave; as if the overthrow of the united kingdom of Judah and Ephraim had bereft him of all his joy; and as if he knew no future kingdom to compensate him with its hopes. But it would be doing cruel injustice to take him thus at his

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word. What we hear is the language of passion, not of sedate conviction. This is well expressed by John Howe in a famous sermon. "The expostulation (he observes) was somewhat passionate, and did proceed upon the sudden view of this disconsolate case, very abstractly considered, and by itself only; and the psalmist did not, at that instant, look beyond it to a better and more comfortable scene of things. An eye bleared with present sorrow sees not far, nor comprehends so much at one view, as it would at another time, or as it doth presently when the tear is wiped out and its own beams have cleared it up."

It would be unwarrantable, therefore, to infer from Ethan's expostulation, that the saints who lived under the early kings were strangers to the hope of everlasting life. I am inclined to go further, and to point to this very complaint as affording a presumption that there was in their hearts an irrepressible sentiment of immortality. The bird that frets and wounds itself on the bars of its cage shews thereby that its proper home is the free air. When inveterate sensuality has succeeded in quenching in a man's heart the hope of a life beyond the grave, the dreary void which succeeds utters itself, not in solemn complaints like Ethan's, but in songs of forced mirth—dismal Anacreontic songs: "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die."

> "'Tis time to live if I grow old,
> 'Tis time short pleasures now to take,
> Of little life the best to make,
> And manage wisely the last stake." *

—*William Binnie.*

Verse 46.—"*Shall thy wrath burn like fire?*" an element that hath no mercy.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 47.—"*Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?*" If I should demand of any, for what cause especially man came into the world; he would answer with the psalmist, God did not create man in vain. Did He create man to heap up wealth together? no, for the apostle saith, "we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out. And, having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." 1 Tim. vi. 6, 7, 8. Did he create him to hawk after power and principality? no, for Nebuchadnezzar lusting after these, lost no less than a kingdom. Did He create him to eat, drink and play? no, for Seneca, though an heathen saith, *major sum*, etc., I am greater, and born to greater things, than that I should be a vile slave of my senses. What then is the proper end of man? That we should live to the praise of the glory of his grace wherewith he hath made us freely accepted in his Beloved. Eph. i. 6.—*William Pulley.*

Verse 47.—"*Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?*" If we think that God hath made man "*in vain*," because so many have short lives, and long afflictions in this world, it is true that God "*hath made*" them so; but it is not true, that therefore they are "made in vain." For those whose days are few and full of trouble, yet may glorify God, and do some good, may keep their communion with God, and go to heaven, and then they are not made in vain. If we think that God has made men in vain, because the most of men neither serve him nor enjoy him, it is true, that as to themselves, they were made in vain, better for them they had not been born, than not be "born again"; but it was not owing to God, that they were made in vain, it was owing to themselves; nor are they made in vain as to him; for he has "made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil," and those whom he is not glorified by he will be glorified upon.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 47.—"*Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?*" When I add to the consideration of my short time, that of dying mankind, and behold a dark and deadly shade universally overspreading the world, the whole species of human creatures vanishing, quitting the stage round about me, and disappearing

* Anacreon's *Age*, as translated by Cowley.

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almost as soon as they show themselves; have I not a fair and plausible ground for that (seemingly rude) challenge? Why is there so unaccountable a phenomenon? such a creature made to no purpose; the noblest part of this inferior creation brought forth into being without any imaginable design? I know not how to untie the knot, upon this only view of the case, or avoid the absurdity. It is hard sure to design the supposal, (or what it may yet seem hard to suppose,) "*that all men were made in vain.*"—*John Howe.*

Verse 47.—"*Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?*" Two thoughts crush us—*Man was made to mourn, and man was made in vain.* Yes, this thought is painfully pressed upon us,—man is "*made in vain!*" In how many particulars, especially when we survey that large range of characters to which we may give the denomination of *wasted lives;* there to behold peerless *genius* frittering itself away upon unworthy attainments, upon worthless performances; *imagination* that might adorn truth, if that *were* possible; *wit*, that might select and discriminate the true from the false; and *eloquence* that might enforce the true;—where do we find these? Unsatisfactory and miserable world, may we well exclaim, where nothing is real, and nothing is realised; when I consider how our lives are passed in the struggle for existence; when I consider the worry of life, where it is not a woe—the woe, where it is not a worry; when I consider how the millions pass their time in a mere toil for sensual objects, and that those to whom the sad contradiction of life never comes, are the most wretched of all, did they but know it; when I consider the millions of distorted existences; and the many millions!—the greater number of the world by far—who wander Christless, loveless, hopeless, over the broad highway of it; when I consider life in many of the awakened as a restless dream, as children beating the curtain and crying in the night; when I consider how many questions recur for ever to us; and will not be silenced, and cannot be answered; when I consider the vanity of the philosopher's inquisitiveness, and the end of Royalty in the tomb; when I look round on the region of my own joys, and know how short their lease is, and that their very ineffableness is a blight upon them; when I consider how little the best can do, and that none can do anything well; and, finally, when I consider the immeasurable immensity of thought within, unfulfilled, and the goading restlessness, I can almost exclaim with our unhappy poet [Byron]—

> "Count all the joys thine hours have seen,
> Count all thy days from anguish free,
> And know, whatever thou hast been,
> 'Twere something better not to be."

—*E. Paxton Hood, in "Dark Sayings on a Harp,"* 1865.

Verses 47, 48.—In these verses, the fundamental condition of Israel's blessedness is found to be an acknowledgment of the total unprofitableness of the flesh. Resurrection is the basis upon which the sure mercies of David rest availably for faith (Acts xiii. 34). This is rather implied than directly stated in the present Psalm.—*Arthur Pridham.*

Verse 48.—"*What man.*" *Mi gheber*, says the original; it is not *Is he*, which is the first name of man, in the Scriptures, and signifies nothing but a *sound;* a voice, a word, a musical air which dies, and evaporates; what wonder if man, that is but *Ishe*, a *sound*, should die too? It is not Adam, which is another name of man, and signifies nothing but *red earth;* let it be earth red with blood, (with that murder which we have done upon ourselves,) let it be earth red with blushing, (so the word is used in the original), with a conscience of our own infirmity, what wonder if man, that is but Adam, guilty of this self-murder in himself, guilty of this in-born frailty in himself, die too? It is not *Enos*, which is also a third name of man, and signifies nothing but a *wretched and miserable creature;* what wonder that man, that is but earth, that is a burden to his neighbours, to his friends, to his kindred, to himself, to whom all others,

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and to whom myself desires death, what wonder if he die? But this question is framed upon more of these names; not *Ishe*, not Adam, not Enos; but it is *Mi gheber*, *Quis vir;* which is the word always signifying a man accomplished in all excellencies, a man accompanied with all advantages; fame, and a good opinion justly conceived, keeps him from being *Ishe*, a mere sound, standing only upon popular acclamation; innocency and integrity keeps him from being Adam, red earth, from bleeding, or blushing at anything he hath done; that holy and religious art of arts, which St. Paul professed. *That he knew how to want, and how to abound*, keeps him from being Enos, miserable or wretched in any fortune; he is *gheber*, a great man, and a good man, a happy man, and a holy man, and yet *Mi gheber*, *Quis homo*, this man must see death.—*John Donne.*

Verse 48.—This psalm is one of those twelve that are marked in the forehead with *Maschil;* that is, *a Psalm giving instruction.* It consisteth of as many verses as the year doth of weeks, and hath, like the year, its summer and winter. The summer part is the former; wherein, the church having reaped a most rich crop (the best blessings of heaven and earth) the Psalmist breaketh forth into the praises of their gracious Benefactor, "*I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever*": so he beginneth, and so he goeth on a great way. Who now would expect anything but mercies, and singing, and summer all the way? But summer ceaseth, and winter commenceth, at verse 38: "*But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.*" Mercies and singing are now turned into troubles and mourning. But nothing shall you hear but bitter querimonies and expostulations till you come to the last verse. There the good man's come to himself again. Though God were angry with his people, he cannot part with God in discontent. Though God had laden them with crosses, he lifts up his head, and presents God with blessing; "*Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and Amen.*" He blesseth him as well for winter as for summer, for troubles as for mercies. And thus the last verse of Psalm having as much affinity with the first in matter, as the last day of the year hath with the first in season; if we circle the Psalm, and bring both ends together, we find a fit resemblance between the year and it.

The text is one of the psalmist's winter drops; a black line from that pen, which erstwhile was so filled with joy, and wróte nothing but rubrics. He complaineth in the next precedent verse, of the brevity of his own life (it was like a winter's day, very short); in this, of the instability of man's life; as though he had said, I am not the only mortal. Other men's lives, though haply clothed with more comforts than mine, are altogether as mortal as mine: for his interrogations are equivalent to strong negations. As to *see sleep* is to sleep; so to *see* or *taste death* is to die. There is no surviving such a sight. Death says, as God once to Moses, "There shall no man *see* me *and live.*" Exod. xxxiii. 20.—*Thomas Du-gard, in a Funeral Sermon*, 1648.

Verse 48.—Death spares no *rank*, no *condition* of men. Kings as well as subjects, princes as well as the meanest rustics are liable to this fatal stroke. The lofty cedars and low shrubs; palaces and cottages are alike here. Indeed, we read that Julius Cæsar bid the master of the ship wherein he was sailing, take courage notwithstanding the boisterous tempest, because he had Cæsar and his fortunes embarked in his vessel, as much as to say, the element on which they then were could not prove fatal to an emperor, to so great a one as he was. Our William surnamed Rufus said, he never heard of a king that was drowned. And Charles the Fifth, at the Battle of Tunis, being advised to retire when the great ordnance began to play, told them that it was never known that an emperor was slain with great shot, and so rushed into the battle. But this we are sure of, it was never known or heard that any king or crowned head escaped the blow of death at last. The sceptre cannot keep off 'the arrows that fly by day, and the sickness which wastes at noon-day;' it is no screen, no guard against the shafts of death. We have heard of great tyrants and usurpers who vaunted that they had the power of life and death, and as absolutely disposed

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of men as Domitian did of flies; but we have heard likewise that in a short time (and generally the shorter the more furious they have been) their sceptres are fallen out of their hands; their crowns are toppled off their heads, and they are themselves snatched away by the King of Terrors. Or, if we speak of those royal personages that are mild and gentle, and like Vespasian are the darlings and delight of the people, yet these no less than others have their fatal hour, and their regal honour and majesty are laid in the dust. *The King doth not die*, may be a Common-law maxim, but it is a falsehood according to the laws of God and Nature, and the established constitution of heaven. For God himself who hath said, "*Ye are gods*," hath also added, "*Ye shall die like men*." In the *Escurial* the palace of the Kings of Spain, is their *cemetery* too; there their royal ashes lie. So in the place where the kings and queens of England are crowned, their predecessors are entombed: to tell them, as it were, that their crowns exempt them not from the grave, and that there is no greatness and splendour that can guard them from the arrest of death. He regards the rich and wealthy no more than the poor and necessitous: he snatches persons out of their mansion-houses and hereditary seats, as well as out of almshouses and hospitals. His dominion is over masters as well as servants, parents as well as children, superiors as well as inferiors.—*John Edwards.*

Verse 48.—

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike th' inevitable hour—
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Can storied urn, or animated bust,
Back to its mansions call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of Death?

—*Thomas Gray*, 1716—1771.

Verse 50.—"*How I do bear in my bosom the reproach*," etc. I take the reproaches of thy servants and thine anointed, (1) as if they reproached me in mine own particular; or, (2) in that they lie so heavy upon my heart; or, (3) in that I am resolved quietly to endure them, and to swallow them down in silence, as not being indeed able to shake them off; because in the eye of reason our condition is at present so contrary to what we waited for; or, (4) in that their reproaches came not to his ears by hear-say only, but were openly to his face cast as it were into his bosom.—*Arthur Jackson.*

Verse 50.—"*I do bear in my bosom the reproach*," etc. The reproach of religion and of the godly doth lie near, and should lie near, the heart of every lively member of the church.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 51.—"*They have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.*" This phrase is obscure in diction, and therefore variously interpreted: 1. Some by the *footsteps of Christ*, judge that his advent in the flesh is meant: others refer the words to David, and take the meaning to be, imitation of him. The first exposition yields this sense: Be mindful, O Lord, of the reproach of thy enemies, wherewith they insult our expectation of thy Anointed, and scoff at his advent as if it would never come. The second interpretation is this: Recollect, O Lord, what contempt thy enemies heap upon us on account of thy servant David, because we fondly cherish his memory and his example, and nourish the hope of thy covenant with him, clinging tenaciously thereto. . . . . Thirdly, this clause may be so interpreted that by עקבות, that is, the heel, we may understand the extremities of the Kingdom of Christ, of David. Thus we may imagine the enemies of God threw this in the teeth of the people of Israel, that they had already come to the end and extremity of the Kingdom of David.—*Musculus.*

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Verse 51 (*second clause*).—The *Chaldee* has: "They have scoffed at the tardiness of Thy Messiah's footsteps." So *Kimchi:* "He delays so long, they say He will never come." Compare 2 Peter iii. 4, 9. The Arabic *aqaba* is used in the sense of "delaying."—*William Kay.*

Verse 51.—"*The footsteps,*" or *foot soles,* that is, the ways, life, actions, and sufferings, Pss. lvi. 6 and xlix. 5. This referred to Christ, respecteth the oracle, Gen. iii. 15, that the Serpent should bruise the foot-sole of the woman's seed; referred to Christians which follow his footsteps, in suffering and dying with him, that we may be glorified with him (1 Pet. ii. 21; Rom. viii. 17); it noteth the scandal of the Cross of Christ, "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness." (1 Cor. i. 23; 1 Pet. iv. 13, 14.) The Chaldee understands it of the slackness of the footsteps.—*Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 52.—"*Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and Amen.*" Victory begins to shine in the phrase, *Blessed be Jehovah for evermore. Amen, and Amen.* Some think that these words are not the words of the Psalmist, because they are of opinion that they do not agree with the preceding, but were written by another, or added by the Collector of the Psalms as a concluding doxology; or if the Psalmist wrote them, he did so merely in finishing his prayer. But it is a matter of the greatest moment; for it indicates the victory of faith, since he observes that after that grief, the reproach of the heel is gloriously removed that the Messiah may remain a victor for ever, having bruised the serpent's head, and taken away from him in perpetuity all his power of hurting. That this should certainly take place, he adds the seal of faith again and again: "*Amen, and Amen.*"—*James Alting,* 1618—1679.

Verse 52.—This doxology belongs alike to all the psalms of the Third Book, and ought not to be treated as if it were merely the last verse of the psalm to which it adjoins. It ought to be set forth in such a shape as would enable and invite God's people to sing it as a separate formula of praise, or in connection with any other psalm.—*William Binnie.*

Verse 52.—As to the words *Amen and Amen,* I readily grant that they are here employed to mark the end of the third book of the Psalms.—*John Calvin.*

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HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—I. Mercies celebrated. 1. When?—"for ever." 2. By whom?—by those who are the subjects of them. 3. Therefore they must live for ever to celebrate them. II. Faithfulness declared. 1. To our own generation. 2. To succeeding generations by its influence upon others.

Verse 2.—I. The Testimony. 1. To the constancy of Mercy. (1) It builds up its trophies every moment. (2) It preserves them for ever. 2. To the constancy of Faithfulness. It remains as the ordinances of heaven. II. Its Confirmation. "I have said," etc., said it, 1. Upon the ground of Scripture. 2. of experience. 3. of reason. 4. of observation of others.

Verses 3, 4. I. The Covenant made. 1. With whom?—with David and in him with David's Lord and Son. The true David—the chosen one—the servant of the Father in redemption. 2. For what?—(1) for his seed. He should have a seed and that seed should be established. (2) for himself, "his throne," etc. II. The Covenant confirmed. 1. By decree. "I have made," etc. 2. By promise. "I will establish." 3. By oath. "I have sworn."

Verse 6.—We have a comparison between God and the most excellent in heaven and earth—challenge both worlds. 1. The true God, sovereign of heaven and earth is incomparably great in his BEING and EXISTENCE; (1) because his being is of himself *eternal;* (2) because he is a *perfect* being; (3) because he is *independent;* (4) because he is unchangeable. 2. God is incomparably great in his ATTRIBUTES and PERFECTIONS. (1) In his *holiness;* (2) in his *wisdom* and *knowledge;* (3) in his *power;* (4) in his *justice;* (5) in his patience; (6) in his *love* and *goodness.* 3. God is incomparably great in his WORKS—creation; providence; redemption, and human salvation.—*Theophilus Jones*, 1830.

Verse 6.—The Incomparableness of God, in his Being, Attributes, Works, and Word.—*Swinnock.* [Nichol's Edition of Swinnock's Works, Vol. IV., pp. 373—508.]

Verses 6, 7.—I. In creation God is far above other beings. Verse 6. II. In Redemption he is far above himself in creation. Verse 7.

Verses 9, 10.—God's present rule in the midst of confusion, and rebellion; and his ultimate overthrow of all adverse forces.

Verse 11.—I. God's possession of heaven, the model of his possession of earth. II. God's possession of earth most certain, and its manifestation in the future most sure. III. The course of action suggested to his people by the two facts.

Verse 12.—The joy of creation in its Creator.

Verse 14.—I. The Equity of the divine government—"justice," etc. No creature can eventually be unjustly dealt with under his dominion, and his kingdom ruleth over all. II. The Sovereignty of the divine government. Truth before mercy. Mercy founded upon truth. "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob and the mercy to Abraham." The covenant made in mercy to Abraham is fulfilled in truth to Jacob.

Verse 15.—I. The gospel is a joyful sound. Good tidings, etc. II. It is a joyful sound to those who know it, hear it, believe it, love it, obey it. III. They to whom it is a joyful sound are blessed. "They shall walk," etc.

Verse 15.—I. There is a theoretical knowledge of the gospel. 2. An experimental knowledge, and, 3. A practical knowledge —*W. Dransfield*, 1859.

Verse 16.—I. Exultation. 1. "In thy name," etc., as rich in mercy as the God of salvation—of all grace—of all consolation. 2. At what season—"all the day," morning, noon, and night. II. Exaltation. "In thy righteousness," etc. 1. How not exalted. Not in their own righteousness. 2. How exalted. "In *thy*," etc. Procured for them—by a divine person (*thy*)—imputed to them. Ours, though

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thine. The righteousness of God as God could not exalt us, but his righteousness as God-man can. Exalted above hell, above earth, above Paradise, above angels. Exalted to friends of God—children of God—one with God, to heaven.

Verse 16 (*second clause*).—Consider, I. What the believer is exalted *above* or *from*, by God's righteousness. 1. It exalts him above the law. 2. Above the world. 3. Above the power and malice of Satan. 4. Above death. 5. Above all accusations (Rom. viii. 33, 34.) II. *To* what happiness or dignity the believer is exalted by virtue of that righteousness. 1. To a state of peace and reconciliation with God. 2. To sonship. 3. To fellowship and familiarity with God, and access to him. 4. And finally, to a state of endless glory.—*E. Erskine.*

Verse 17.—I. The blessedness of the righteous. 1. Their internal glory. Reliance upon divine strength. 2. Their internal honour. "In thy favour," etc. II. The participation in that blessedness. The *their* of the people of God becomes *our*. Their strength our horn. Happy they, who, with respect to all the privileges of the saints, can thus turn *their* into *our*.

Verse 17.—1. Consider our natural weakness. 2. Consider our strength in God. 3. Give God the glory of it.

Verse 18.—I. Jehovah—his power, self-existence, and majesty—our defence. II. The Holy One of Israel—his character, covenant character, and unity—our government.

Verse 19.—I. The work required. "Help." 1. By whom? By God himself. 2. For what? To reconcile God to man, and man to God. II. The persons selected for this work. 1. Human. "Chosen out of the people." 2. Divine. "Thy Holy One." III. His qualifications for the work. 1. His own ability for the office. "One that is mighty." 2. His appointment to it by God. "I have laid," etc. "I have chosen," etc.

Verse 19 (*last clause*).—Election, extraction, exaltation.

Verses 20, 21.—I. The Messiah would be of the seed of David. The true David. II. He would be a servant of the Father. "My servant." III. He would be consecrated to his office by God. "With my holy oil," etc. IV. He would perfectly fulfil it. "With whom my hand," etc. V. He would be sustained in it by the Father. "Mine arm," etc.

Verses 22, 23.—I. A prophecy of the conflict of the Messiah with Satan. Satan could not exact any debt or homage for him. II. Of his refutation of his enemies. "I will beat down," etc. The Scribes and Pharisees were beaten down before his face. III. Of the destruction of their city and nation. "And plague them," etc.

Verse 26.—Our Lord's filial spirit, and how it was displayed.

Verse 29.—I. The subjects of Messiah's reign. "His seed." 1. For union—*his* seed. 2, For resemblance 3. For multitude. II. The duration of his reign. 1. They for ever one with him. 2. He for ever on the throne.

Verses 30—34.—I. The persons referred to. "His children." "Ye are all the children," etc. II. The supposition concerning them. "If his children forsake," etc. 1. They may possibly—may fall, though not fall away. 2. They will probably, because they are far from being perfect. 3. They have actually: as David himself and others. III. The threatening founded upon that supposition. 1. Specified—"the rod—stripes." They shall smart for it sooner or later. 2. Certified. "Then will I." IV. The qualification of the threatening. "Nevertheless," etc. 1. The nevertheless characterized. Loving-kindness not removed, etc. 2. Emphasised. The rod may seem to be in anger, nevertheless, etc.

There is, I. An if. II. A then. III. A nevertheless.

Verse 39.—I. Providences may often seem to be at variance with promises. II. Promises are never at variance with providences. It is the covenant of thy servant and his crown still.

Verse 39.—How the throne of King Jesus may be profaned.

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Verse 40.—I. What God had done. "Broken down," etc. II. What he had not done. Not taken away sorrow for his departure and desire for his return.

Verse 43.—Cases in which the sword of the gospel appears to have its edge turned.

Verses 44, 45.—I. A prophecy that the Messiah would be meek and lowly. "Made his glory to cease." II. Would become a servant to the Father. "Cast his throne down," etc. III. Would be cut off in the midst of his days. "The days of his youth," etc. IV. That he would die an ignominious death. "Hast covered him," etc.

Verse 45.—The excellence of the first days of Christianity, and in what respect their glory has departed from us.

Verse 46.—The hand of God is to be acknowledged. I. In the nature of affliction. "Wilt thou hide thyself," etc. II. In the duration of affliction. "How long, Lord?" III. In the severity of affliction. Wrath burning like fire. IV. In the issue of affliction. How long? for ever? In all these respects the words are applicable both to Christ and to his people.

Verse 46.—"*Remember.*" The prayer of the dying thief, the troubled believer, the persecuted Christian.

Verse 47.—I. An appeal to divine goodness. "Remember," etc. Let not my life be all trouble and sorrow. II. To divine wisdom. "Wherefore," etc. Was man made only to be miserable Will not man have been made in vain if his life be but short, and that short life be nothing but sorrow?

Verse 52.—I. The voice. "Blessed," etc. In himself in all his works and ways—in his judgments as well as in his mercies—as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—"for evermore." II. The echo, "Amen and amen." Amen, says the church on earth—says the church in heaven—say the angels of God—says the whole holy and happy universe—says eternity past and eternity to come.

WORK ON THE EIGHTY-NINTH PSALM.

In the Works of JOHN BOYS, folio, pp. 805-9, there is an Exposition of a portion of this Psalm.

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HERE ENDETH THE THIRD BOOK OF

THE PSALMS.

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PSALM XC.

TITLE.—A Prayer of Moses the man of God. *Many attempts have been made to prove that Moses did not write this psalm, but we remain unmoved in the conviction that he did so. The condition of Israel in the wilderness is so pre-eminently illustrative of each verse, and the turns, expressions, and words are so similar to many in the Pentateuch, that the difficulties suggested are, to our mind, light as air in comparison with the internal evidence in favour of its Mosaic origin. Moses was mighty in word as well as deed, and this psalm we believe to be one of his weighty utterances, worthy to stand side by side with his glorious oration recorded in Deuteronomy. Moses was peculiarly a man of God and God's man; chosen of God, inspired of God, honoured of God, and faithful to God in all his house, he well deserved the name which is here given him. The psalm is called a prayer, for the closing petitions enter into its essence, and the preceding verses are a meditation preparatory to the supplication. Men of God are sure to be men of prayer. This was not the only prayer of Moses, indeed it is but a specimen of the manner in which the seer of Horeb was wont to commune with heaven, and intercede for the good of Israel. This is the oldest of the psalms, and stands between two books of psalms as a composition unique in its grandeur, and alone in its sublime antiquity. Many generations of mourners have listened to this psalm when standing around the open grave, and have been consoled thereby, even when they have not perceived its special application to Israel in the wilderness and have failed to remember the far higher ground upon which believers now stand.*

SUBJECT AND DIVISIONS.—*Moses sings of the frailty of man, and the shortness of life, contrasting therewith the eternity of God, and founding thereon earnest appeals for compassion. The only division which will be useful separates the contemplation* 1—11 *from the prayer* 12—17 · *there is indeed no need to make even this break, for the unity is well preserved throughout.*

EXPOSITION.

LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.

2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou *art* God.

3 Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.

4 For a thousand years in thy sight *are but* as yesterday when it is past, and *as* a watch in the night.

5 Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are *as* a sleep: in the morning *they are* like grass *which* groweth up.

6 In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

7 For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.

8 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret *sins* in the light of thy countenance.

9 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale *that is told.*

10 The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years, yet *is* their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

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11 Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, *so is* thy wrath.

1. "*Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.*" We must consider the whole psalm as written for the tribes in the desert, and then we shall see the primary meaning of each verse. Moses, in effect, says—wanderers though we be in the howling wilderness, yet we find a home in thee, even as our forefathers did when they came out of Ur of the Chaldees and dwelt in tents among the Canaanites. To the saints the Lord Jehovah, the self-existent God, stands instead of mansion and rooftree; he shelters, comforts, protects, preserves, and cherishes all his own. Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the saints dwell in their God, and have always done so in all ages. Not in the tabernacle or the temple do we dwell, but in God himself; and this we have always done since there was a church in the world. We have not shifted our abode. Kings' palaces have vanished beneath the crumbling hand of time—they have been burned with fire and buried beneath mountains of ruins, but the imperial race of heaven has never lost its regal habitation. Go to the Palatine and see how the Cæsars are forgotten of the halls which echoed to their despotic mandates, and resounded with the plaudits of the nations over which they ruled, and then look upward and see in the ever-living Jehovah the divine home of the faithful, untouched by so much as the finger of decay. Where dwelt our fathers a hundred generations since, there dwell we still. It is of New Testament saints that the Holy Ghost has said, "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in God and God in him!" It was a divine mouth which said, "Abide in me," and then added, "he that abideth in me and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit." It is most sweet to speak with the Lord as Moses did, saying, "Lord, thou art our dwelling-place," and it is wise to draw from the Lord's eternal condescensions reasons for expecting present and future mercies, as the psalmist did in the next psalm wherein he describes the safety of those who dwell in God.

2. "*Before the mountains were brought forth.*" Before those elder giants had struggled forth from nature's womb, as her dread firstborn, the Lord was glorious and self-sufficient. Mountains to him, though hoar with the snows of ages, are but new-born babes, young things whose birth was but yesterday, mere novelties of an hour. "*Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world.*" Here too the allusion is to a birth. Earth was born but the other day, and her solid land was delivered from the flood but a short while ago. "*Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God,*" or, "thou art, O God." God was, when nothing else was. He was God when the earth was not a world but a chaos, when mountains were not upheaved, and the generation of the heavens and the earth had not commenced. In this Eternal One there is a safe abode for the successive generations of men. If God himself were of yesterday, he would not be a suitable refuge for mortal men; if he could change and cease to be God he would be but an uncertain dwelling-place for his people. The eternal existence of God is here mentioned to set forth, by contrast, the brevity of human life.

3. "*Thou turnest man to destruction,*" or "to dust." Man's body is resolved into its elements, and is as though it had been crushed and ground to powder. "*And sayest, Return, ye children of men,*" *i.e.*, return even to the dust out of which ye were taken. The frailty of man is thus forcibly set forth; God creates him out of the dust, and back to dust he goes at the word of his Creator. God resolves and man dissolves. A word created and a word destroys. Observe how the action of God is recognised; man is not said to die because of the decree of faith, or the action of inevitable law, but the Lord is made the agent of all, his hand turns and his voice speaks; without these we should not die, no power on earth or hell could kill us.

"An angel's arm can't save me from the grave,
Myriads of angels can't confine me there."

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4. "*For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past.*" A thousand years! This is a long stretch of time. How much may be crowded into it,—the rise and fall of empires, the glory and obliteration of dynasties, the beginning and the end of elaborate systems of human philosophy, and countless events, all important to household and individual, which elude the pens of historians. Yet this period, which might even be called the limit of modern history, and is in human language almost identical with an indefinite length of time, is to the Lord as nothing, even as time already gone. A moment yet to come is longer than "yesterday when it is past," for that no longer exists at all, yet such is a chiliad to the Eternal. In comparison with eternity, the most lengthened reaches of time are mere points, there is in fact, no possible comparison between them. "*And as a watch in the night,*" a time which is no sooner come than gone. There is scarce time enough in a thousand years for the angels to change watches; when their millennium of service is almost over it seems as though the watch were newly set. We are dreaming through the long night of time, but God is ever keeping watch, and a thousand years are as nothing to him. A host of days and nights must be combined to make up a thousand years to us, but to God, that space of time does not make up a whole night, but only a brief portion of it. If a thousand years be to God as a single night-watch, what must be the life-time of the Eternal!

5. "*Thou carriest them away as with a flood.*" As when a torrent rushes down the river-bed and bears all before it, so does the Lord bear away by death the succeeding generations of men. As the hurricane sweeps the clouds from the sky, so time removes the children of men. "*They are as a sleep.*" Before God men must appear as unreal as the dreams of the night, the phantoms of sleep. Not only are our plans and devices like a sleep, but we ourselves are such. "We are such stuff as dreams are made of." "*In the morning they are like grass which groweth up.*" As grass is green in the morning and hay at night, so men are changed from health to corruption in a few hours. We are not cedars, or oaks, but only poor grass, which is vigorous in the spring, but lasts not a summer through. What is there upon earth more frail than we!

6. "*In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up.*" Blooming with abounding beauty till the meadows are all besprent with gems, the grass has a golden hour, even as man in his youth has a heyday of flowery glory. "*In the evening it is cut down, and withereth.*" The scythe ends the blossoming of the field-flowers, and the dews at night weep their fall. Here is the history of the grass—sown, grown, blown, mown, gone; and the history of man is not much more. Natural decay would put an end both to us and the grass in due time; few, however, are left to experience the full result of age, for death comes with his scythe, and removes our life in the midst of its verdure. How great a change in how short a time! The morning saw the blooming, and the evening sees the withering.

7. This mortality is not accidental, neither was it inevitable in the original of our nature, but sin has provoked the Lord to anger, and therefore thus we die. "*For we are consumed by thine anger.*" This is the scythe which mows and the scorching heat which withers. This was specially the case in reference to the people in the wilderness, whose lives were cut short by justice on account of their waywardness; they failed, not by a natural decline, but through the blast of the well-deserved judgments of God. It must have been a very mournful sight to Moses to see the whole nation melt away during the forty years of their pilgrimage, till none remained of all that came out of Egypt. As God's favour is life, so his anger is death; as well might grass grow in an oven as men flourish when the Lord is wroth with them. "*And by thy wrath are we troubled,*" or terror-stricken. A sense of divine anger confounded them, so that they lived as men who knew that they were doomed. This is true of us in a measure, but not altogether, for now that

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immortality and life are brought to light by the gospel, death has changed its aspect, and, to believers in Jesus, it is no more a judicial execution. Anger and wrath are the sting of death, and in these believers have no share; love and mercy now conduct us to glory by the way of the tomb. It is not seemly to read these words at a Christian's funeral without words of explanation, and a distinct endeavour to shew how little they belong to believers in Jesus, and how far we are privileged beyond those with whom he was not well pleased, "whose carcasses fell in the wilderness." To apply an ode, written by the leader of the legal dispensation under circumstances of peculiar judgment, in reference to a people under penal censure, to those who fall asleep in Jesus, seems to be the height of blundering. We may learn much from it, but we ought not to misapply it by taking to ourselves, as the beloved of the Lord, that which was chiefly true of those to whom God had sworn in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. When, however, a soul is under conviction of sin, the language of this Psalm is highly appropriate to his case, and will naturally suggest itself to the distracted mind. No fire consumes like God's anger, and no anguish so troubles the heart as his wrath. Blessed be that dear substitute,

> "Who bore that we might never
> His Father's righteous ire."

8. "*Thou hast set our iniquities before thee.*" Hence these tears! Sin seen by God must work death; it is only by the covering blood of atonement that life comes to any of us. When God was overthrowing the tribes in the wilderness he had their iniquities before him, and therefore dealt with them in severity. He could not have their iniquities before him and not smite them. "*Our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.*" There are no secrets before God; he unearths man's hidden things, and exposes them to the light. There can be no more powerful luminary than the face of God, yet, in that strong light, the Lord set the hidden sins of Israel. Sunlight can never be compared with the light of him who made the sun, of whom it is written, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." If by his countenance is here meant his love and favour, it is not possible for the heinousness of sin to be more clearly manifested than when it is seen to involve ingratitude to one so infinitely good and kind. Rebellion in the light of justice is black, but in the light of love it is devilish. How can we grieve so good a God? The children of Israel had been brought out of Egypt with a high hand, fed in the wilderness with a liberal hand, and guided with a tender hand, and their sins were peculiarly atrocious. We, too, having been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and saved by abounding grace, will be verily guilty if we forsake the Lord. What manner of persons ought we to be? How ought we to pray for cleansing from secret faults?

It is to us a wellspring of delights to remember that our sins, as believers, are now cast behind the Lord's back, and shall never be brought to light again: therefore we live, because, the guilt being removed, the death-penalty is removed also.

9. "*For all our days are passed away in thy wrath.*" Justice shortened the days of rebellious Israel; each halting place became a graveyard; they marked their march by the tombs they left behind them. Because of the penal sentence their days were dried up, and their lives wasted away. "*We spend our years as a tale that is told.*" Yea, not their days only, but their *years* flew by them like a thought, swift as a meditation, rapid and idle as a gossip's story. Sin had cast a shadow over all things, and made the lives of the dying wanderers to be both vain and brief. The first sentence is not intended for believers to quote, as though it applied to themselves, for our days are all passed amid the lovingkindness of the Lord, even as David says in the twenty-third Psalm, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Neither is the life of the gracious man unsubstantial as a story-teller's tale; he lives in

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Jesus, he has the divine Spirit within him, and to him "life is real, life is earnest"—the simile only holds good if we consider that a holy life is rich in interest, full of wonders, chequered with many changes, yet as easily ordered by providence as the improvisatore arranges the details of the story with which he beguiles the hour. Our lives are illustrations of heavenly goodness, parables of divine wisdom, poems of sacred thought, and records of infinite love; happy are we whose lives are such tales.

10. "*The days of our years are threescore years and ten.*" Moses himself lived longer than this, but his was the exception not the rule: in his day life had come to be very much the same in duration as it is with us. This is brevity itself compared with the men of the elder time; it is nothing when contrasted with eternity. Yet is life long enough for virtue and piety, and all too long for vice and blasphemy. Moses here in the original writes in a disconnected manner, as if he would set forth the utter insignificance of man's hurried existence. His words may be rendered, "The days of our years! In them seventy years:" as much as to say, "The days of our years? What about them? Are they worth mentioning? The account is utterly insignificant, their full tale is but seventy." "*And if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow.*" The unusual strength which overleaps the bound of threescore and ten only lands the aged man in a region where life is a weariness and a woe. The strength of old age, its very prime and pride, are but labour and sorrow; what must its weakness be? What panting for breath! What toiling to move! What a failing of the senses! What a crushing sense of weakness! The evil days are come and the years wherein a man cries, "I have no pleasure in them." The grasshopper has become a burden and desire faileth. Such is old age. Yet mellowed by hallowed experience, and solaced by immortal hopes, the latter days of aged Christians are not so much to be pitied as envied. The sun is setting and the heat of the day is over, but sweet is the calm and cool of the eventide; and the fair day melts away, not into a dark and dreary night, but into a glorious, unclouded, eternal day. The mortal fades to make room for the immortal; the old man falls asleep to wake up in the region of perennial youth. "*For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*" The cable is broken and the vessel sails upon the sea of eternity; the chain is snapped and the eagle mounts to its native air above the clouds. Moses mourned for men as he thus sung; and well he might, as all his comrades fell at his side. His words are more nearly rendered, "He drives us fast and we fly away;" as the quails were blown along by the strong west wind, so are men hurried before the tempests of death. To us, however, as believers, the winds are favourable; they bear us as the gales bear the swallows away from the wintry realms, to lands

> "Where everlasting spring abides
> And never withering flowers."

Who wishes it to be otherwise? Wherefore should we linger here? What has this poor world to offer us that we should tarry on its shores? Away, away! This is not our rest. Heavenward, Ho! Let the Lord's winds drive fast if so he ordains, for they waft us the more swiftly to himself, and our own dear country.

11. "*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*" Moses saw men dying all around him: he lived among funerals, and was overwhelmed at the terrible results of the divine displeasure. He felt that none could measure the might of the Lord's wrath. "*Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*" Good men dread that wrath beyond conception, but they never ascribe too much terror to it: bad men are dreadfully convulsed when they awake to a sense of it, but their horror is not greater than it had need be, for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God. Holy Scripture when it depicts God's wrath against sin never uses an hyperbole; it would be impossible to exaggerate it. Whatever feelings of pious awe and holy trembling may move the tender heart,

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it is never too much moved; apart from other considerations the great truth of the divine anger, when most powerfully felt, never impresses the mind with a solemnity in excess of the legitimate result of such a contemplation. What the power of God's anger is in hell, and what it would be on earth, were it not in mercy restrained, no man living can rightly conceive. Modern thinkers rail at Milton and Dante, Bunyan and Baxter, for their terrible imagery; but the truth is that no vision of poet, or denunciation of holy seer, can ever reach to the dread height of this great argument, much less go beyond it. The wrath to come has its horrors rather diminished than enhanced in description by the dark lines of human fancy; it baffles words, it leaves imagination far behind. Beware ye that forget God lest he tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver. God is terrible out of his holy places. Remember Sodom and Gomorrah! Remember Korah and his company! Mark well the graves of lust in the wilderness! Nay, rather bethink ye of the place where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. Who is able to stand against this justly angry God? Who will dare to rush upon the bosses of his buckler, or tempt the edge of his sword? Be it ours to submit ourselves as dying sinners to this eternal God, who can, even at this moment, command us to the dust, and thence to hell.

12 So teach *us* to number our days, that we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom.

13 Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.

14 O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

15 Make us glad according to the days *wherein* thou hast afflicted us, *and* the years *wherein* we have seen evil.

16 Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.

17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

12. "*So teach us to number our days.*" Instruct us to set store by time, mourning for that time past wherein we have wrought the will of the flesh, using diligently the time present, which is the accepted hour and the day of salvation, and reckoning the time which lieth in the future to be too uncertain to allow us safely to delay any gracious work or prayer. Numeration is a child's exercise in arithmetic, but in order to number their days aright the best of men need the Lord's teaching. We are more anxious to count the stars than our days, and yet the latter is by far more practical. "*That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*" Men are led by reflections upon the brevity of time to give their earnest attention to eternal things; they become humble as they look into the grave which is so soon to be their bed, their passions cool in the presence of mortality, and they yield themselves up to the dictates of unerring wisdom; but this is only the case when the Lord himself is the teacher; he alone can teach to real and lasting profit. Thus Moses prayed that the dispensations of justice might be sanctified in mercy. "The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ," when the Lord himself speaks by the law. It is most meet that the heart which will so soon cease to beat should while it moves be regulated by wisdom's hand. A short life should be wisely spent. We have not enough time at our disposal to justify us in misspending a single quarter of an hour. Neither are we sure of enough life to justify us in procrastinating for a moment. If we were wise in heart we should see this, but mere head wisdom will not guide us aright.

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13. "*Return, O* LORD, *how long?*" Come in mercy to us again. Do not leave us to perish. Suffer not our lives to be both brief and bitter. Thou hast said to us, "Return, ye children of men," and now we humbly cry to thee, "Return, thou preserver of men." Thy presence alone can reconcile us to this transient existence; turn thou unto us. As sin drives God from us, so repentance cries to the Lord to return to us. When men are under chastisement they are allowed to expostulate, and ask "how long?" Our faith in these times is not too great boldness with God, but too much backwardness in pleading with him. "*And let it repent thee concerning thy servants.*" Thus Moses acknowledges the Israelites to be God's servants still. They had rebelled, but they had not utterly forsaken the Lord; they owned their obligations to obey his will, and pleaded them as a reason for pity. Will not a man spare his own servants? Though God smote Israel, yet they were his people, and he had never disowned them, therefore is he entreated to deal favourably with them. If they might not see the promised land, yet he is begged to cheer them on the road with his mercy, and to turn his frown into a smile. The prayer is like others which came from the meek lawgiver when he boldly pleaded with God for the nation; it is Moses-like. He here speaks with the Lord as a man speaketh with his friend.

14. "*O satisfy us early with thy mercy.*" Since they must die, and die so soon, the psalmist pleads for speedy mercy upon himself and his brethren. Good men know how to turn the darkest trials into arguments at the throne of grace. He who has but the heart to pray need never be without pleas in prayer. The only satisfying food for the Lord's people is the favour of God; this Moses earnestly seeks for, and as the manna fell in the morning he beseeches the Lord to send at once his satisfying favour, that all through the little day of life they might be filled therewith. Are we so soon to die? Then, Lord, do not starve us while we live. Satisfy us at once, we pray thee. Our day is short and the night hastens on, O give us in the early morning of our days to be satisfied with thy favour, that all through our little day we may be happy. "*That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*" Being filled with divine love, their brief life on earth would become a joyful festival, and would continue so as long as it lasted. When the Lord refreshes us with his presence, our joy is such that no man can take it from us. Apprehensions of speedy death are not able to distress those who enjoy the present favour of God; though they know that the night cometh they see nothing to fear in it, but continue to live while they live, triumphing in the present favour of God and leaving the future in his loving hands. Since the whole generation which came out of Egypt had been doomed to die in the wilderness, they would naturally feel despondent, and therefore their great leader seeks for them that blessing which, beyond all others, consoles the heart, namely, the presence and favour of the Lord.

15. "*Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.*" None can gladden the heart as thou canst, O Lord, therefore as thou hast made us sad be pleased to make us glad. Fill the other scale. Proportion thy dispensations. Give us the lamb, since thou has sent us the bitter herbs. Make our days as long as our nights. The prayer is original, childlike, and full of meaning; it is moreover based upon a great principle in providential goodness, by which the Lord puts the good over against the evil in due measure. Great trial enables us to bear great joy, and may be regarded as the herald of extraordinary grace. God's dealings are according to scale; small lives are small throughout; and great histories are great both in sorrow and happiness. Where there are high hills there are also deep valleys. As God provides the sea for leviathan, so does he find a pool for the minnow; in the sea all things are in fit proportion for the mighty monster, while in the little brook all things befit the tiny fish. If we have fierce afflictions we may look for overflowing delights, and our faith may boldly ask for them. God who is great in justice when he

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chastens will not be little in mercy when he blesses, he will be great all through: let us appeal to him with unstaggering faith.

16. "*Let thy work appear unto thy servants.*" See how he dwells upon that word *servants*. It is as far as the law can go, and Moses goes to the full length permitted him: henceforth Jesus calls us not servants but friends, and if we are wise we shall make full use of our wider liberty. Moses asks for displays of divine power and providence conspicuously wrought, that all the people might be cheered thereby. They could find no solace in their own faulty works, but in the work of God they would find comfort. "*And thy glory unto their children.*" While their sons were growing up around them, they desired to see some outshinings of the promised glory gleaming upon them. Their sons were to inherit the land which had been given them by covenant, and therefore they sought on their behalf some tokens of the coming good, some morning dawnings of the approaching noonday. How eagerly do good men plead for their children. They can bear very much personal affliction if they may but be sure that their children will know the glory of God, and thereby be led to serve him. We are content with the work if our children may but see the glory which will result from it: we sow joyfully if they may reap.

17. "*And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.*" Even upon us who must not see thy glory in the land of Canaan; it shall suffice us if in our characters the holiness of God is reflected, and if over all our camp the lovely excellences of our God shall cast a sacred beauty. Sanctification should be the daily object of our petitions. "*And establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.*" Let what we do be done in truth, and last when we are in the grave; may the work of the present generation minister permanently to the building up of the nation. Good men are anxious not to work in vain. They know that without the Lord they can do nothing, and therefore they cry to him for help in the work, for acceptance of their efforts, and for the establishment of their designs. The church as a whole earnestly desires that the hand of the Lord may so work with the hand of his people, that a substantial, yea, an eternal edifice to the praise and glory of God may be the result. We come and go, but the Lord's work abides. We are content to die so long as Jesus lives and his kingdom grows. Since the Lord abides for ever the same, we trust our work in his hands, and feel that since it is far more his work than ours he will secure it immortality. When we have withered like grass our holy service, like gold, silver, and precious stones, will survive the fire.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—The correctness of the title which ascribes the Psalm to Moses is confirmed by its unique simplicity and grandeur; its appropriateness to his times and circumstances; its resemblance to the Law in urging the connection between sin and death; its similarity of diction to the poetical portions of the Pentateuch, without the slightest trace of imitation or quotation; its marked unlikeness to the Psalms of David, and still more to those of later date; and finally, the proved impossibility of plausibly assigning it to any other age or author.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Title.—"*A prayer of Moses.*" Moses may be considered as the first composer of sacred hymns.—*Samuel Burder.*

Title.—The Psalm is described in the title as a *prayer*. This description shews, as Amyraldus saw, that the kernel of the Psalm in the *second* part, and that the design of the first is to prepare the way for the second, and lay down a basis on which it may rest.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

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Title.—"*A prayer of Moses.*" Moses was an old and much-tried man, but age and experience had taught him that, amidst the perpetual changes which are taking place in the universe, one thing at least remains immutable, even the faithfulness of him who is "from everlasting to everlasting God." How far back into the past may the patriarch have been looking when he spake these words? The burning bush, the fiery furnace of Egypt, the Red Sea, Pharaoh with his chariots of war, and the weary march of Israel through the wilderness, were all before him; and in all of them he had experienced that "God is the Rock, his work perfect, all his ways judgment" (Deut. xxxii. 4). But Moses was looking beyond these scenes of his personal history when he said, "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations." (Deut. xxxii. 7), and we may be sure that he was also looking beyond them when he indited the song, "*Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.*" Yes; he was casting in his mind how God had been the refuge of Jacob and Isaac, of Abraham, Noah, and all the patriarchs. Moses could take a retrospect of above a thousand years, which had all confirmed the truth. I can do no more. At this point of time I can look back to the days of Moses and Joshua and David, and descending thence to the days of the Son of God upon earth, and of Paul and Peter, and all the saints of the Church down to the present hour; and what a thousand years avouched to Moses, three thousand now avouch to me: the Lord is the dwelling-place of those that trust in him from generation to generation. Yes; and to him who was the refuge of a Moses and an Abraham, I too in the day of trouble can lift my hands. Delightful thought! That great Being who, during the lapse of three thousand years, amidst the countless changes of the universe, has to this day remained unchanged, is MY God.—*Augustus F. Tholuck, in "Hours of Christian Devotion,"* 1870.

Whole Psalm.—Although some difficulties have been started, there seems no reason to doubt that this Psalm is the composition of Moses. From the remotest period his name has been attached to it, and almost every Biblical scholar, from Jerome down to Hengstenberg, has agreed to accept it as a prayer of that "man of God" whose name it has always carried. If so, it is one of the oldest poems in the world. Compared with it Homer and Pindar are (so to speak) modern, and even King David is of recent date. That is to say, compared with this ancient hymn the other Psalms are as much more modern as Tennyson and Longfellow are more modern than Chaucer. In either case there are nearly five centuries between.—*James Hamilton.*

Whole Psalm.—The 90th Psalm might be cited as perhaps the most sublime of human compositions—the deepest in feeling—the loftiest in theologic conception—the most magnificent in its imagery. True is it in its report of human life—as troubled, transitory, and sinful. True in its conception of the Eternal—the Sovereign and the Judge; and yet the refuge and hope of men, who, notwithstanding the most severe trials of their faith, lose not their confidence in him; but who, in the firmness of faith, pray for, as if they were predicting, a near-at-hand season of refreshment. Wrapped, one might say, in mystery, until the distant day of revelation should come, there is here conveyed the doctrine of Immortality; for in the very plaint of the brevity of the life of man, and of the sadness of these, his few years of trouble, and their brevity, and their gloom, there is brought into contrast the Divine immutability; and yet it is in terms of a submissive piety: the thought of a life eternal is here in embryo. No taint is there in this Psalm of the pride and petulance—the half-uttered blasphemy—the malign disputing or arraignment of the justice or goodness of God, which have so often shed a venomous colour upon the language of those who have writhed in anguish, personal or relative. There are few probably among those who have passed through times of bitter and distracting woe, or who have stood—the helpless spectators of the miseries of others, that have not fallen into moods of mind violently in contrast with the devout and hopeful melancholy which breathes throughout this ode. Rightly attributed

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to the Hebrew Lawgiver or not, it bespeaks its remote antiquity, not merely by the majestic simplicity of its style, but negatively, by the entire avoidance of those sophisticated turns of thought which belong to a late—a lost age in a people's intellectual and moral history. This Psalm, undoubtedly, is centuries older than the moralizings of that time when the Jewish mind had listened to what it could never bring into a true assimilation with its own mind—the abstractions of the Greek Philosophy.

With this one Psalm only in view—if it were required of us to say, in brief, what we mean by the phrase—"The Spirit of the Hebrew Poetry"—we find our answer well condensed in this sample. This magnificent composition gives evidence, not merely as to the mental qualities of the writer, but as to the tastes and habitudes of the writer's contemporaries, his hearers, and his readers; on these several points—*first*, the free and customary command of a poetic diction, and its facile imagery' so that whatever the poetic soul would utter, the poet's material is near at hand for his use. There is then that depth of feeling—mournful, reflective, and yet hopeful and trustful, apart from which poetry can win for itself no higher esteem than what we bestow upon other decorative arts, which minister to the demands of luxurious *sloth*. There is, moreover, as we might say, underlying this poem, from the first line to the last, the substance of philosophic thought, apart from which, expressed or understood, poetry is frivolous, and is not in harmony with the seriousness of human life: this Psalm is of a sort which Plato would have written, or Sophocles—if only the one or the other of these minds had possessed a heaven-descended Theology.—*Isaac Taylor*.

Verse 1.—"*Lord*." Observe the change of the divine names in this Psalm. Moses begins with the declaration of the Majesty of the Lord (*Adonai*) but when he arrives at ver. 13, he opens his prayer with the Name of grace and covenanted mercy to Israel—JEHOVAH; and he sums up all in ver. 17, with a supplication for the manifestation of the *beauty* נעם of "the Lord our God" (JEHOVAH, ELOHIM).—*Christopher Wordsworth*.

Verse 1.—"*Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place*." Many seem to beg God's help in prayer, but are not protected by him: they seek it only in a storm, and when all other means and refuges fail them. But a Christian must maintain constant communication with God; must dwell in God, not run to him now and then.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 1.—This exordium breathes life, and pertains to a certain hope of the resurrection and of eternal life. Since he calls God, who is eternal, our habitation, or to speak more clearly, our place of refuge, to whom fleeing we may be in safety. For if God is our dwelling-place, and God is life, and we dwellers in him, it necessarily follows, that we are in life, and shall live for ever. . . . For who will call God the dwelling-place of the dead? Who shall regard him as a sepulchre? He is life; and therefore they also live to whom he is a dwelling-place. After this fashion Moses, in the very introduction, before he lets loose his horrible thunderings and lightnings, fortifies the trembling, that they may firmly hold God to be the living dwelling-place of the living, of those that pray to him, and put their trust in him.

It is a remarkable expression, the like of which is nowhere in Sacred Scripture, that God is a *dwelling-place*. Scripture in other places says the very opposite, it calls men temples of God, in whom God dwells; "the temple of God is holy," says Paul, "which temple ye are." Moses inverts this, and affirms, we are inhabitants and masters in this house. For the Hebrew word מָעוֹן properly signifies a dwelling-place, as when the Scripture says, "In Zion is his dwelling-place," where this word (Maon) is used. But because a house is for the purpose of safety, it results, that this word has the meaning of a refuge or place of refuge. But Moses wishes to speak with such great care that he may shew that all our hopes have been placed most securely in God, and that they who are about to pray to this God may be assured that

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they are not afflicted in this work in vain, nor die, since they have God as a place of refuge, and the divine Majesty as a dwelling-place, in which they may rest secure for ever. Almost in the same strain Paul speaks, when he says to the Colossians, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." For it is a much clearer and more luminous expression to say, Believers dwell in God, than that God dwells in them. He dwelt also visibly in Zion, but the place is changed. But because he (the believer, is in God, it is manifest, that he cannot be moved nor transferred, for God is a habitation of a kind that cannot perish. Moses therefore wished to exhibit the most certain life, when he said, God is our dwelling-place, not the earth, not heaven, not paradise, but simply God himself. If after this manner you take this Psalm it will become sweet, and seem in all respects most useful. When a monk, it often happened to me when I read this Psalm, that I was compelled to lay the book out of my hand. But I knew not that these terrors were not addressed to an awakened mind. I knew not that Moses was speaking to a most obdurate and proud multitude, which neither understood nor cared for the anger of God, nor were humbled by their calamities, or even in prospect of death.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 1.—"*Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place,*" etc. In this first part the prophet acknowledgeth that God in all times, and in all ages hath had a special care of his saints and servants, to provide for them all things necessary for this life; for under the name of "*dwelling place,*" or *mansion house*, the prophet understandeth all helps and comforts necessary for this life, both for maintenance and protection. For the use of such houses was wont to be not only to defend men from the injury of the weather, and to keep safely, within the walls and under the roof all other things necessary for this life, and to be a place of abode, wherein men might the more commodiously provide for all other things necessary, and walk in some calling profitable to their neighbour and to the glory of God; but also to protect them from the violence of brute beasts and rage of enemies. Now the prophet herein seems to note a special and more immediate providence of God; (for of all kind of people they seemed to be most forsaken and forlorn); that whereas the rest of the world seemed to have their habitations and mansions rooted in the earth, and so to dwell upon the earth; to live in cities and walled towns in all wealth and state; God's people were as it were without house and home. Abraham was called out of his own country, from his father's house, where no doubt he had goodly buildings, and large revenues, and was commanded by God to live as a foreigner in a strange country, amongst savage people, that he knew not; and to abide in tents, booths, and cabins, having little hope to live a settled and comfortable life in any place. In like manner lived his posterity, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve patriarchs, wandering from place to place in the land of Canaan; from thence translated into the land of Egypt, there living at courtesy, and as it were tenants at will, and in such slavery and bondage, that it had been better for them to have been without house and home. After this for forty years together (at which time this Psalm was penned) they wandered up and down in a desolate wilderness, removing from place to place, and wandering, as it were in a maze. So that of all the people of the earth, God's own people had hitherto lived as pilgrims and banished persons, without house or home; and therefore the prophet here professeth that God himself more immediately by his extraordinary providence, for many ages together had protected them, and been as it were a mansion house unto them; that is, the more they were deprived of these ordinary comforts of this life, the more was God present with them, supplying by his extraordinary and immediate providence what they wanted in regard of ordinary means. The due consideration of this point may minister matter of great joy and comfort to such children of God as are thoroughly humbled with the consideration of man's mortality in general, or of theirs whom they rely and depend upon in special.—*William Bradshaw*, 1621.

Verse 1.—"*Our dwelling place.*" God created the earth for beasts to

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inhabit, the sea for fishes, the air for fowls, and heaven for angels and stars, so that man hath no place to dwell and abide in but God alone.—*Giovanni della Mirandola Pico*, 1463—1494.

Verses 1, 2.—The comfort of the believer against the miseries of this short life is taken from the decree of their election, and the eternal covenant of redemption settled in the purpose and counsel of the blessed Trinity for their behoof, wherein it was agreed before the world was, that the *Word* to be incarnate, should be the Saviour of the elect: for here the asserting of the eternity of God is with relation to his own chosen people; for "*Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations*," and "*thou art God from everlasting to everlasting*," is in substance thus much:—Thou art from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God in purpose and affection toward us thy people, and so thou art *our God* from everlasting, in regard of thy eternal purpose of love, electing us, and in regard of thy appointing redemption for us by the Redeemer.—*David Dickson*.

Verses 1, 2.—If man be ephemeral, God is eternal.—*James Hamilton*.

Verses 1—6.—

O Lord, thou art our home, to whom we fly,
  And so hast always been, from age to age;
Before the hills did intercept the eye,
  Or that the frame was up of earthly stage,
    One God thou wert, and art, and still shall be;
    The line of time, it doth not measure thee.

Both death and life obey thy holy lore,
  And visit in their turns as they are sent;
A thousand years with thee they are no more
  Than yesterday, which, ere it is, is spent:
    Or as a watch by night, that course doth keep,
    And goes and comes, unwares to them that sleep.

Thou carryest man away as with a tide:
  Then down swim all his thoughts that mounted high;
Much like a mocking dream, that will not bide,
  But flies before the sight of waking eye;
    Or as the grass, that cannot term obtain,
    To see the summer come about again.

At morning, fair it musters on the ground;
  At even it is cut down and laid along:
And though it spared were, and favour found,
  The weather would perform the mower's wrong:
    Thus hast thou hanged our life on brittle pins,
    To let us know it will not bear our sins."

—*Francis Bacon*.

Verse 2.—"*The earth and the world*." The word *earth* here is used to denote the world as distinguished either from heaven (Gen. i. 1), or from the sea (Gen. i. 10). The term "*world*" in the original is commonly employed to denote the earth considered as *inhabited*, or as capable of being inhabited, a dwelling-place for living beings.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 2.—"*From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God*." The everlastingness of which Moses speaks is to be referred not only to the essence of God, but also to his providence, by which he governs the world. He intends not merely that he is, but that he is God.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 2.—Such a God (he says) have we, such a God do we worship, to such a God do we pray, at whose command all created things sprang into being. Why then should we fear if this God favours us? Why should we tremble at the anger of the whole world? If He is our dwelling-place, shall we not be safe though the heavens should go to wrack? For we have a Lord greater than all the world. We have a Lord so mighty that at his word all things sprang into being. And yet we are so fainthearted that if the anger of a single prince or king, nay, even of a single neighbour, is to be borne, we tremble and

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droop in spirit. Yet in comparison with this King, all things beside in the whole world are but as the lightest dust which a slight breath moves from its place, and suffers not to be still. In this way this description of God is consolatory, and trembling spirits ought to look to this consolation in their temptations and dangers.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou turnest man to destruction,*" etc. The prophet conceiveth of God as of a *potter*, that having of dust tempered a mass, and framed it into a vessel, and dried it, doth presently, within a minute or an hour after, dash it again in pieces, and beat it to dust, in passion as it were speaking unto it, "Get thee to dust again." The word here translated "*destruction,*" signifies a beating, or grinding, or pounding of a thing to powder. And the prophet seems to allude to the third of Genesis, where God speaks of Adam, "Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return," as if he should say, O Lord, thou that hast made and framed man of the dust of the earth, thou beatest him to dust again; and as thou madest him by thy word alone, so with thy word thou suddenly turnest, and beatest him again to dust; as a man that makes a thing, and presently mars it again . . . . He doth it with a word, against which is no resistance, when that word is once come out of his mouth; it is not all the diet, physic, and help, and prayers in the world that can save the life. And this he can do suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye. And therefore we should, as we love our lives, fear him, and take heed how we offend and displease him that can with a word turn the strongest man into dust.—*William Bradshaw.*

Verse 3.—"*Thou turnest man to destruction,*" etc. The first word for "*man,*" signifies a man full of misery, full of sickness and infirmities, a miserable man, אָנוֹשׁ. And the other word here used in the end of the verse, signifies a man made of *clay*, or of the very slime of the earth. From hence we learn what is the nature of all men, of all the sons of *Adam*, viz., a piece of living *clay*, a little piece of red earth. And besides that man is subject to *breaking* and *crushing*, every way a miserable man; so is he of a brittle mould, a piece of red clay, that hath in it for a time a living soul, which must return to God that gave it; and the body, this piece of earth, return to the earth from whence it came: and if we had no Scripture at all to prove this, daily experience before our eyes makes it clear how all men, even the wisest, the strongest, the greatest and the mightiest monarchs and princes in the world, be but miserable men, made of red earth, and quickly turn again to dust.—*Samuel Smith, in "Moses his Prayer,"* 1656.

Verse 3.—"*Thou turnest man to destruction.*" Augustine says, We walk amid perils. If we were glass vases we might fear less dangers. What is there more fragile than a vase of glass? And yet it is preserved, and lasts for centuries: we therefore are more frail and infirm.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 3.—"*Return ye.*" One being asked what life was? made an answer answerless, for he presently turned his back and went his way.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 4.—"*A thousand years,*" etc. As to a very rich man a thousand sovereigns are as one penny; so, to the eternal God, a thousand years are as one day.—*John Albert Bengel,* 1687—1752.

Verse 4.—The Holy Ghost expresseth himself according to the manner of men, to give us some notion of an infinite duration, by a resemblance suited to our capacity. If a thousand years be but as a day to the life of God, then as a year is to the life of man, so are three hundred and sixty-five thousand years to the life of God; and as seventy years are to the life of man, so are twenty-five millions five hundred and fifty thousand years to the life of God. Yet still, since there is no proportion between time and eternity, we must dart our thoughts beyond all these, for years and days measure only the duration of created things, and of those only that are material and corporeal, subject to the motion of the heavens, which makes days and years.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 4.—"*As yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.*" He corrects the previous clause with an extraordinary abbreviation. For he says that

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the whole space of human life, although it may be very long, and reach a thousand years, yet with God it is esteemed not only as one day, which has already gone, but is scarcely equal to the fourth part of a night. For the nights were divided into four watches, which lasted three hours each. And indeed by the word *night*, it is meant that human affairs in this life are involved in much darkness, many errors, dangers, terrors, and sorrows.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 4.—"*As a watch in the night.*" The night is wont to appear shorter than the day, and to pass more swiftly, because those who sleep, says Euthymius, notice not the lapse of time. On account of the darkness also, it is less observed; and to those at work the time seems longer, than to those who have their work done.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 4.—"*A watch in the night.*" Sir John Chardin observes in a note on this verse, that as the people of the East have no clocks, the several parts of the day and of the night, which are eight in all, are given notice of. In the Indies, the parts of the night are made known as well by instruments of music in great cities, as by the rounds of the watchmen, who with cries, and small drums, give them notice that a fourth part of the night is passed. Now as these cries awaked those who had slept all that quarter part of the night, it appeared to them but as a moment.—*Harmer's Observations.*

Verse 4.—The ages and the dispensations, the promise to Adam, the engagement with Noah, the oath to Abraham, the covenant with Moses—these were but watches, through which the children of men had to wait amid the darkness of things created, until the morning should dawn of things uncreated. Now is "the night far spent, and the day at hand."—*Plain Commentary.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou carriest them away as with a flood.*" זְרַמְתָּם (*zeram-tam*) *thou hast inundated them*, namely, the years of man, i.e., thou hast hurried them away with a flood, thou hast made them to glide away as water, *they will be sleep.—Bythner's "Lyre of David."*

Verse 5.—"*Thou carriest them away as with a flood.*" Let us meditate seriously upon the swift passage of our days, how our life runs away like a stream of waters, and carrieth us with it. Our condition in the eyes of God in regard of our life in this world is as if a man that knows not how to swim, should be cast into a great stream of water, and be carried down with it, so that he may sometimes lift up his head or his hands, and cry for help, or catch hold of this thing and that, for a time, but his end will be drowning, and it is but a small time that he can hold out, for the flood which carries him away will soon swallow him up. And surely our life here if it be rightly considered, is but like the life of a person thus violently carried down a stream. All the actions and motions of our life are but like unto the strivings and strugglings of a man in that case: our eating, our drinking, our physic, our sports, and all other actions are but like the motions of the sinking man. When we have done all that we can, die we must, and be drowned in this deluge.—*William Bradshaw.*

Verse 5.—"*Away as with a flood.*" "A man is a bubble," said the Greek proverb, which Lucian represents to this purpose, saying, "All the world is a storm, and men rise up in their several generations like bubbles. Some of these instantly sink into the deluge of their first parent, and are hidden in a sheet of water, having no other business in the world but to be born, that they might be able to die; others float up and down two or three turns, and suddenly disappear, and give their place to others: and they that live longest upon the face of the waters are in perpetual motion, restless and uneasy, and being crushed in by a great drop from a cloud, sink into flatness and a froth; the change not being great; it being hardly possible that a bubble should be more a nothing than it was before."—*Jeremy Taylor.*

Verse 5 (*first clause*).—The most ancient mode of measuring small portions of time was by water flowing out of a vessel the clepsydra of the Greeks and Romans; and Ovid has compared the lapse of time to the flowing of a river [Metam. xv. 180.]—*Stephen Street.*

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Verse 5.—"*They are as a sleep.*" For as in the visions of sleep, we seeing, see not, hearing we hear not, tasting or touching we neither taste nor touch, speaking we speak not, walking we walk not; but when we seem to employ movements and gestures, in no respect do we employ them, since the mind vainly forms without any real objects images of things that exist not, as if they existed. In this very way, the imaginations of those who are awake closely resemble dreams; they come, they go, they confront us and flee from us; before they are seized, they fly away.—*Philo, in Le Blanc.*

Verse 5.—"*They are as a sleep.*" Our life may be compared to sleep in four respects. 1. In regard of the shortness of it. 2. In regard of the easiness of being put out of it. 3. In regard of the many means to disquiet and break it off. 4. With regard to the many errors in it.

For the first three. Sleep is but short, and the sweeter it is, the shorter it seems to be. And as it is but short of itself, though it should last the full swing of nature; so the soundest sleep is easily broken; the least knock, the lowest call puts men out of it; and a number of means and occasions there be to interrupt and break it off. And is it not so with the life of man? Is not the longest life short? Is it not the shorter, the sweeter and fuller of contents it is? And is it not easily taken away? Are there not many means to bring us unto our end? even as many as there are to waken us out of sleep.

For the fourth. How many errors are we subject to in sleep? In sleep the prisoner many times dreams that he is at liberty; he that is at liberty, that he is in prison; he that is hungry, that he is feeding daintily; he that is in want, that he is in great abundance; he that abounds, that he is in great want. How many in their sleep have thought they have gotten that which they shall be better for for ever, and when they are even in the hope of present possessing some such goodly matter, or beginning to enjoy it, or in the midst of their joy, they are suddenly awaked, and then all is gone with them, and their golden fancies vanish away in an instant. So for evil and sorrow as well. And is it not just so in the life of man?—*William Bradshaw.*

Verse 5.—"*They are like grass.*" In this last similitude, the prophet compares men to *grass*, that as *grass* hath a time of growing and a time of withering, even so has man. "*In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up.*" In which words Moses compares the former part of man's life, which is the space of thirty-three years, to the time of growing of grass, and that is accounted the time of the perfection of man's strength and age; at which age, according to the course of nature, man flourisheth as grass doth; that is the time of a man's prime and flourishing estate.

But "*in the evening*"; that is, when the grass is ripe, and ready to be cut down, "*it withereth.*" Even so man, being once at his strength, and ripest age, doth not stand at a stay, nor continueth long so; but presently begins to decay, and to wither away, till old age comes, and he is cut down by the scythe of death.

Now, in that Moses useth so many similitudes, and all to show how frail this life of man is, we are taught, that the frailty, vanity, and shortness of man's life is such, that examples will scarcely shew it. Death comes as a *flood*, violently and suddenly; we are as a *sleep;* we are as *grass;* our life is like *a dream;* we spend our days *as a tale that is told*, verse 9. All these similitudes Moses hath in this Psalm, as if he wanted words and examples, how to express the vanity, frailty, and shortness thereof.—*Samuel Smith.*

Verse 6.—"*In the morning.*" This can hardly mean "in early youth," as some of the Rabbis explain. The words, strictly speaking, are a part of the comparison ("they are as grass which springeth afresh in the morning"), and are only thus placed first to give emphasis to the figure. In the East, one night's rain works a change as if by magic. The field at evening was brown, parched, arid as a desert; in the morning it is green with the blades of grass. The scorching hot wind (James i. 11) blows upon it, and again before evening it is withered.—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

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Verse 6.—"*Cut down.*"

Stout and strong to-day,
To-morrow turned to clay.

This day in his bloom,
The next, in the tomb.

It is true that to some Death sends his grey harbingers before, and gives them timely warning of his approach. But in how many cases does he arrive unannounced, and, lifting up his scythe, mows down the lofty! On shipboard there is but a plank between us and death; on horseback, but a fall. As we walk along the streets, death stretches a threatening finger from every tile upon the roofs! "He comes up into our windows, and enters into our palaces; he cuts off the children from without, and the young men from the streets." Jer. ix. 21. Our life is less than an handbreadth. How soon and how insensibly we slip into the grave!—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

Verse 7.—"*For we are consumed by thine anger.*" This is a point disputed by philosophers. They seek for the cause of death, since indeed proofs of immortality that cannot be despised exist in nature. The prophet replies, that the chief cause must not be sought in the material, either in a defect of the fluids, or in a failure of the natural heat; but that God being offended at the sins of men, hath subjected this nature to death and other infinite calamities. Therefore, our sins are the causes which have brought down this destruction. Hence he says, *In thine anger we vanish away.—Mollerus.*

Verse 7.—"*For we are consumed by thine anger,*" etc. Whence we may first of all observe, how they compare their present estate in the wilderness, with the estate of other nations and people, and shew that their estate was far worse than theirs: for others died now one, and then one, and so they were diminished; but for them, they were hastily consumed and suddenly swept away by the plague and pestilence which raged amongst them. Hence we may observe, first of all—That it is a ground of humiliation to God's people when their estate is worse than God's enemies'. Moses gathers this as an argument to humble them, and to move them to repentance and to seek unto God; viz., that because of their sins they were in a far worse case and condition than the very enemies of God were. For though their lives were short, yet they confess that theirs was far worse than the very heathen themselves, for they were *suddenly consumed by his anger.* When God is worse to his own church and people than he is to his enemies; when the Lord sends wars in a nation called by his name, and peace in other kingdoms that are anti-Christian; sends famine in his church, and plenty to the wicked; sends the plague and pestilence in his church, and health and prosperity to the wicked; oh, here is matter of mourning and humiliation; and it is that which hath touched God's people to the quick, and wounded them to the heart, to see the enemies of the church in better condition than the church itself.—*Samuel Smith.*

Verse 7.—"*By thy wrath are we troubled.*" The word used by Moses is much stronger than merely "troubled." It implies being cut off, destroyed—in forms moreover of overwhelming terror.—*Henry Cowles, in "The Psalms; with Notes." New York,* 1872.

Verse 8.—God needs no other light to discern our sins by but the light of his own face. It pierceth through the darkest places; the brightness thereof enlightneth all things, discovers all things. So that the sins that are committed in deepest darkness are all one to him as if they were done in the face of the sun. For they are done in his face, that shines more, and from which proceeds more light than from the face of the sun. So that this ought to make us the more fearful to offend; he sees us when we see not him, and the light of his countenance shines about us when we think ourselves hidden in darkness.

Our sins are not only then in his sight when they are a committing and

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whilst the deed is doing; but ever after, when the act is past and gone and forgotten, yet then is it before the face of God, even as if it were in committing: and how should this make us afraid to sin! When our sins are not only in his sight while they are a committing, but so continue still for ever after they are past and done.

God *sets our sins before him;* this shows he is so affected with them, he takes them so to heart, that he doth in a special manner continue the remembrance of them. As those that having had great wrong will store it up, or register it, or keep some remembrance of it or other, lest they should forget, when time shall serve, to be quit with those that have wronged them: so doth God, and his so doing is a sign that he takes our sins deeply to heart; which should teach us to fear the more how we offend him. When God in any judgment of death, or sickness, or loss of friends, shews his wrath, we should think and meditate of this; especially when he comes nearest us: Now the Lord looks upon my sins, they are now before him; and we should never rest till we have by repentance moved him to blot them out. Yea, to this end we should ourselves call them to remembrance. For the more we remember them, the more God forgets them; the more we forget them, the more God remembers them; the more we look upon them ourselves, the more he turneth his eyes from them.—*William Bradshaw.*

Verse 8.—It is a well known fact that the appearance of objects, and the ideas which we form of them, are very much affected by the situation in which they are placed in respect to us, and by the light in which they are seen. Objects seen at a distance, for example, appear much smaller than they really are. The same object, viewed through different mediums, will often exhibit different appearances. A lighted candle, or a star, appears bright during the absence of the sun; but when that luminary returns, their brightness is eclipsed. Since the appearance of objects, and the ideas which we form of them, are thus affected by extraneous circumstances, it follows, that no two persons will form precisely the same ideas of any object, unless they view it in the same light, or are placed with respect to it in the same situation.

Apply these remarks to the case before us. The psalmist addressing God, says, "*Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.*" That is, our iniquities or open transgressions, and our secret sins, the sins of our hearts, are placed, as it were, full before God's face, immediately under his eye; and he sees them in the pure, clear, all-disclosing light of his own holiness and glory. Now if we would see our sins as they appear to him, that is, as they really are, if we would see their number, blackness and criminality, and the malignity and desert of every sin, we must place ourselves, as nearly as is possible, in his situation, and look at sin, as it were, through his eyes. We must place ourselves and our sins in the centre of that circle which is irradiated by the light of his countenance where all his infinite perfections are clearly displayed, where his awful majesty is seen, where his concentrated glories blaze, and burn, and dazzle, with insufferable brightness. And in order to this, we must, in thought, leave our dark and sinful world, where God is unseen and almost forgotten, and where consequently, the evil of sinning against him cannot be fully perceived—and mount up to heaven, the peculiar habitation of his holiness and glory, where he does not, as here, conceal himself behind the veil of his works, and of second causes, but shines forth the unveiled God, and is seen as he is.

My hearers, if you are willing to see your sins in their true colors; if you would rightly estimate their number, magnitude and criminality, bring them into the hallowed place, where nothing is seen but the brightness of unsullied purity, and the splendours of uncreated glory; where the sun itself would appear only as a dark spot; and there, in the midst of this circle of seraphic intelligences, with the infinite God pouring all the light of his countenance round you, review your lives, contemplate your offences, and see how they appear. Recollect that the God, in whose presence you are, is the Being who forbids sin, the Being

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of whose eternal law sin is the transgression, and against whom every sin is committed.—*Edward Payson.*

Verse 9.—"*For all our days go back again* (פנה) *in thy wrath.*" Hitherto he has spoken of the cause of that wrath of God which moveth him to smite the world with such mortality. Now here he further sets forth the same by the effects thereof in reference to that present argument he hath in hand. 1. That our days do as it were go backward in his wrath: that whereas God gave us being to live, our life and our being are nothing else but a going backward, as it were, to death and to nothing. Even as if a stranger being suddenly rapt and carried mid-way to his home, where are all his comforts, he should spend all the time that is behind, not in going forward to his home, but in going backward to the place from which he was suddenly brought. All the sons of Adam as soon as they have being and live are brought suddenly a great part of their way: and whereas they should go forward and live longer and longer, they from their first beginning to live go backward again to death and to nothing. This is the sum in effect of that which the Lord saith in the beginning of the Psalm, (ver. 3:) "*Thou bringest men to destruction; saying, Return again, ye sons of Adam:*" as if he should say, Thou makest a man, and when he is made, he in thy wrath doth haste to nothing else but destruction and to be marred again. Thus do our days as it were go backward, and we in them return from whence we came.—*William Bradshaw.*

Verse 9.—When I was in Egypt, three or four years ago, I saw what Moses himself might have seen, and what the Israelites, no doubt, very often witnessed:—a crowd of people surrounding a professed story-teller, who was going through some tale, riveting the attention and exciting the feelings of those who listened to him. This is one of the customs of the East. It naturally springs up among any people who have few books, or none; where the masses are unable to read, and where, therefore, they are dependent for excitement or information on those who can address the ear, and who recite, in prose or verse, traditionary tales and popular legends. I dare say this sort of thing would be much in repute among the Israelites themselves during their detention in the wilderness, and that it served to beguile for them many a tedious hour. It is by this custom, then, that we venture to illustrate the statement of the text.

The hearing of a story is attended by a rapid and passing interest—it leaves behind it a vague impression, beyond which comparatively but few incidents may stand out distinctly in the after thought. In our own day even, when tales are put into printed books, and run through three or four volumes, we feel when we have finished one, how short it appears after all, or how short the time it seemed to take for its perusal. If full of incident, it may seem sometimes long to remember, but we generally come to the close with a sort of feeling that says, "And so that's all." But this must have been much more the case with the tales "that were told." These had to be compressed into what could be repeated at one time, or of which three or four might be given in an evening or an hour. The story ended; and then came the sense of shortness, brevity, the rapid flight of the period employed by it, with something like a feeling of wonder and dissatisfaction at the discovery of this. "For what is your life? It is even as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."—*Thomas Binney.*

Verse 9.—"*As a tale.*" The grace whereof is *brevity.*—*John Trapp.*

Verse 9.—"*As a tale that is told.*" The Chaldee has it, *like the breath of our mouth in winter.*—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 9.—The thirty-eight years, which after this they were away in the wilderness, were not the subject of the sacred history, for little or nothing is recorded of that which happened to them from the second year to the fortieth. After they came out of Egypt, their time was perfectly trifled away, and was not worthy to be the subject of a history, but only of "*a tale that is told;*" for

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it was only to pass away time like telling stories, that they spent those years in the wilderness; all that while they were in the consuming, and another generation was in the rising. . . . . The spending of our years is like the telling of a tale. A year when it is past is like a tale when it is told. Some of our years are as a pleasant story, others as a tragical one; most mixed, but all short and transient; that which was long in the doing may be told in a short time. —*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 9.—"*We spend our year as a tale that is told,*" or, *as a meditation* (so some translate) suddenly or swiftly: a discourse is quickly over, whether it be a discourse from the mouth, or in the mind; and of the two the latter is far the more swift and nimble of foot. A discourse in our thoughts outruns the sun, as much as the sun outruns a snail; the thoughts of a man will travel the world over in a moment; he that now sits in this place, may be at the world's end in his thoughts, before I can speak another word.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 9.—"*We spend our years as a tale that is told.*" This seems to express both a necessary fact and a censure. The rapid consumption of our years—their speedy passing away, is inevitable. But they may be spent also in a trifling manner to little valuable purpose, which would complete the disconsolate reflection on them, by the addition of guilt and censure.—*John Foster*, 1768—1843.

Verse 9.—"*As a tale that is told.*" In the Hebrew it is כְּמוֹ־הֶגֶה, *sicut meditatio*, (*as a meditation*) and so we read it in the margin, as if all our years were little else than a continual meditation upon the things of this world. Indeed, much of man's time is spent in this kind of vain meditation, as how to deceive and play fast and loose for advantage; such a meditation had they, Isaiah lix. 13, or meditating with the heart lying words; the same word in the Hebrew as in my text; or how to heap up riches, such a meditation had that covetous man in the gospel, Luke xii. 17; or how to violate the sacred bonds of religion and laws of God, such a meditation had they, Ps. ii. 1—3; and in such vain meditations as these do men spend their years "as a tale that is told" . . . . .

To close this point with Gregory Nazianzen.

What are we but a vain dream that hath no existence or being, a mere phantasm or apparition that cannot be held, a ship sailing in the sea which leaves no impression or trace behind it, a dust, a vapour, a morning dew, a flower flourishing one day and fading another, yea, the same day behold it springing and withered, but my text adds another metaphor from the flying of a bird, "*and we fly away,*" not go and run but fly, the quickest motion that any corporeal creature hath. Our life is like the flight of a bird, 'tis here now and 'tis gone out of sight suddenly. The Prophet therefore speaking of the speedy departure of Ephraim's glory expresseth it thus, "It shall flee away like a bird," Hos. ix. 11; and Solomon saith the like of riches, "they make themselves wings and flee away like an eagle toward heaven"; Prov. xxiii. 5. David wished for the wings of a dove that he might flee away and be at rest, and good cause he had for it, for this life is not more short than miserable. . . . . .

Be it our care then not to come creeping and coughing to God with a load of diseases and infirmities about us, when we are at death's door and not before, but to consecrate the first fruits of our life to his service. It is in the spending our time (as one compares it) as in the distilling of waters, the thinnest and purest part runs out first and only the lees at last: what an unworthy thing will it be to offer the prime of our time to the world, the flesh, and the devil, and the dregs of it to God. He that forbade the lame and the blind in beasts to be sacrificed, will not surely allow it in men; if they come not to present their bodies a living sacrifice, while they are living and lively too, ere they be lame or blind or deformed with extremity of age, it is even a miracle if it prove then a holy, acceptable, or reasonable service.—*Thomas Washbourne*, 1655.

Verse 9 (*second clause*).—The Hebrew is different from all the Versions. "*We consume our years* (כְּמוֹ־הֶגֶה *kemo hegeh*) *like a groan.*" We live a dying, whining, complaining life, and at last a *groan* is its termination!—*Adam Clarke.*

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Verse 9.—The Vulgate translation has, "*Our years pass away like those of a spider.*" It implies that our life is as frail as the thread of a spider's web. Constituted most curiously the spider's web is; but what more fragile? In what is there more wisdom than in the complicated frame of the human body; and what more easily destroyed? Glass is granite compared with flesh; and vapours are rocks compared with life.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 10.—"*It is soon cut off, and we fly away.*" At the Witan or council assembled at Edwin of Northumbria at Godmundingham (modern name Godmanham), to debate on the mission of Paulinus, the King was thus addressed by a heathen Thane, one of his chief men:—"The present life of man, O King, may be likened to what often happens when thou art sitting at supper with thy thanes and nobles in winter-time. A fire blazes on the hearth, and warms the chamber; outside rages a storm of wind and snow; a sparrow flies in at one door of thy hall, and quickly passes out at the other. For a moment and while it is within, it is unharmed by the wintry blast, but this brief season of happiness over, it returns to that wintry blast whence it came, and vanishes from thy sight. Such is the brief life of man; we know not what went before it, and we are utterly ignorant as to what shall follow it. If, therefore, this new doctrine contain anything more certain, it justly deserves to be followed."—*Bede's Chronicle.*

Verse 10.—*The time of our life is threescore years and ten* (saith Moses), or set it upon the tenters, and rack it to *fourscore*, though not one in every fourscore arrives to that account, yet can we not be said to live so long; for take out, first, ten years for infancy and childhood, which Solomon calls the time of wantonness and vanity (Eccles. xi.), wherein we scarce remember what we did, or whether we lived or no; and how short it is then? Take out of the remainder a third part for sleep, wherein like blocks we lie senseless, and how short is it then? Take out yet besides the time of our carking and worldly care, wherein we seem both dead and buried in the affairs of the world, and how short is it then? And take out yet besides, our times of wilful sinning and rebellion, for while we sin, we live not, but we are "*dead in sin*," and what remaineth of life? yea, how short is it then? so short is that life which nature allows, and yet we sleep away part, and play away part, and the cares of the world have a great part, so that the true spiritual and Christian life hath little or nothing in the end.—*From a Sermon by Robert Wilkinson, entitled "A Meditation of Mortalitie, preached to the late Prince Henry, some few daies before his death,"* 1612.

Verse 10.—"*Threescore years and ten.*" It may at first seem surprising that Moses should describe the days of man as "*Threescore years and ten.*" But when it is remembered, that, in the second year of the pilgrimage in the wilderness, as related in Numbers xiv., God declared that all those who had been recently numbered at Sinai should die in the wilderness, before the expiration of forty years, the lamentation of Moses on the brevity of human life becomes very intelligible and appropriate; and the Psalm itself acquires a solemn and affecting interest, as a penitential confession of the sins which had entailed such melancholy consequences on the Hebrew nation; and as a humble deprecation of God's wrath; and as a funeral dirge upon those whose death had been pre-announced by the awful voice of God.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 10.—There have been several *gradual abbreviations* of man's life. Death hath been coming nearer and nearer to us, as you may see in the several ages and periods of the world. Adam, the first of human kind, lived nine hundred and thirty years. And seven or eight hundred years was a usual period of man's life before the Flood. But the Sacred History (which hath the advantage and pre-eminence of all other histories whatsoever, by reason of its antiquity) acquaints us that immediately after the Flood the years of man's life were shortened by no less than half. . . . . *After the Flood* man's life was apparently shorter than it was before, for they fell from nine hundred, eight hundred, and

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seven hundred years to four hundred and three hundred, as we see in the age of Arphaxad, Salah, Heber: yea, they fell to two hundred and odd years, as we read of Peleg, Reu, Serug, and Tharah; yea, they came down to less than two hundred years. In the space of a few years man's life was again cut shorter by almost half, if not a full half. We read that Abraham lived but one hundred and seventy-five years, so that man's age ran very low then. See the account given in Scripture of Nahor, Sarah, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph (who died at a hundred) which confirms the same. And again the *third time*, man's life was shortened by almost *another half*, viz., about the year of the World 2,500, in Moses' time. For he sets the bounds of man's life thus: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." Ps. xc. 10. Eighty years is the utmost limit he sets man's life at, *i.e.*, in the most ordinary and common account of man's life. Though some are of the opinion that these words do not give an account of the duration of man's life in general, but refer to the short lives of the Israelites in the wilderness, yet I do not see but it may take in both; and Moses who composed the Psalm, lived a hundred and twenty years himself, yet he might speak of the common term of man's life, and what usually happened to the generality of men.—*John Edwards.*

Verse 10.—"*Their strength is labour and sorrow.*" Most commonly old age is a feeble estate; the very grasshopper is a burden to it. Eccl. xii. 5. Even the old man himself is a burden, to his wife, to his children, to himself. As Barzillai said to David, "I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women?" 2 Sam. xix. 35. Old age, we say, is a good guest, and should be made welcome, but that he brings such a troop with him; blindness, aches, coughs, &c.; these are troublesome, how should they be welcome? "*Their strength is labour and sorrow.*" If their very strength, which is their best, be labour and grief, what is their worst?—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 10.—"*Their strength is labour and sorrow.*"—

Unnumbered maladies his joints invade,
Lay siege to life, and press the dire blockade.

—*Samuel Johnson*, 1709—1784.

Verse 10.—"*Their strength.*" Properly, "*the pride*" of the days of our life is labour and sorrow—*i.e.*, our days at their best.—*Barth's* "*Bible Manual.*"

Verse 10.—"*We fly away.*"

Bird of my breast, away!
The long-wish'd hour is come.
On to the realms of cloudless day,
On to thy glorious home!

Long has been thine to mourn
In banishment and pain.
Return, thou wand'ring dove, return,
And find thy ark again!

Away, on joyous wing,
Immensity to range;
Around the throne to soar and sing,
And faith for sight exchange.

* * * * *

Flee, then, from sin and woe,
To joys immortal flee;
Quit thy dark prison-house below,
And be for ever free!

I come, ye blessed throng,
Your tasks and joys to share;
O, fill my lips with holy song,
My drooping wing upbear.

—*Henry Francis Lyte*, 1793—1847.

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Verse 11.—"*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*" We may take some scantling, some measure of the wrath of man, and know how far it can go, and what it can do, but we can take no measure of the wrath of God, for it is unmeasurable.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 11.—"*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*" None at all; and unless the power of that can be known, it must abide as unspeakable as the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.—*John Bunyan.*

Verse 11.—Moses, I think, here means, that it is a holy awe of God, and that alone, which makes us truly and deeply feel his anger. We see that the reprobate, although they are severely punished, only chafe upon the bit, or kick against God, or become exasperated, or are stupefied, as if they were hardened against all calamities; so far are they from being subdued. And though they are full of trouble, and cry aloud, yet the Divine anger does not so penetrate their hearts as to abate their pride and fierceness. The minds of the godly alone are wounded with the wrath of God; nor do they wait for his thunderbolts, to which the reprobate hold out their hard and iron necks, but they tremble the very moment when God moves only his little finger. This I consider to be the true meaning of the prophet.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 11.—"*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*" etc. The meaning is, What man doth truly know and acknowledge the power of thine anger, according to that measure of fear wherewith thou oughtest to be feared? Note hence, how Moses and the people of God, though they feared God, yet notwithstanding confess that they failed in respect of that measure of the fear of God which they ought to have had; for we must not think, but Moses and some of his people did truly fear God. But yet in regard of the power of God's anger, which was now very great and grievous, their fear of God was not answerable and proportionable; then it is apparent that Moses and his people failed in respect of the measure of the fear of God which they ought to have had, in regard of the greatness and grievousness of the judgments of God upon them.

See, that the best of God's servants in this life fall short in their fear of God, and so in all graces of the Spirit; in that love of God, in faith, in repentance, and in obedience, we come short all of us of that which the Lord requires at our hands. For though we do know God, and that he is a just God, and righteous, and cannot wink at sin; yet what man is there that so fears before him as he ought to be feared? what man so quakes at his anger as he should; and is so afraid of sin as he ought to be? We have no grace here in perfection, but the best faith is mixed with infidelity; our hope with fear; our joy with sorrow. It is well we can discern our wants and imperfections, and cry out with the man in the gospel, "I believe; Lord, help my unbelief!"—*Samuel Smith.*

Verse 11.—"*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*" No man knows the power of God's anger, because that power has never yet put itself forth to its full stretch. Is there, then, no measure of God's wrath—no standard by which we may estimate its intenseness? There is no fixed measure or standard, but there is a variable one. The wicked man's fear of God is a measure of the wrath of God. If we take the man as he may be sometime taken, when the angel of death is upon him, when the sins of his youth and of his maturer years throng him like an armed troop, and affright and afflict him—when with all his senses keenly alive to the rapid strides of bodily decay, he feels that he must die, and yet that he is not prepared—why, it may come to pass, it does occasionally, though not always come to pass, that his anticipations of the future are literally tremendous. There is such a fear and such a dread of that God into whose immediate presence he feels himself about to be ushered, that even they who love him best, and charm him most, shrink from the wildness of his gaze and the fearfulness of his speech. And we cannot tell the man, though he may be just delirious with apprehension, that his fear of God invests the wrath of God with a darker than its actual colouring. On the contrary, we know that

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"*according to the fear, so is the wrath.*" We know that if man's fear of God be wrought up to the highest pitch, and the mind throb so vehemently that its framework threaten to give way and crumble, we know that the wrath of the Almighty keeps pace with this gigantic fear. . . . . .

If it has happened to you—and there is not perhaps a man on the face of the earth to whom it does not sometimes happen—if it has ever happened to you to be crushed with the thought, that a life of ungodliness must issue in an eternity of woe, and if amid the solitude of midnight and amid the dejections of sickness there pass across the spirit the fitful figures of an avenging ministry, then we have to tell you, it is not the roar of battle which is powerful enough, nor the wail of orphans which is thrilling enough, to serve as the vehicle of such a communication; we have to tell you, that you fly to a refuge of lies, if you dare flatter yourselves that either the stillness of the hour or the feebleness of disease has caused you to invest vengeance with too much of the terrible. We have to tell you, that the picture was not overdrawn which you drew in your agony. "*According to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*" Fear is but a mirror, which you may lengthen indefinitely, and widen indefinitely, and wrath lengthens with the lengthening and widens with the widening, still crowding the mirror with new and fierce forms of wasting and woe. We caution you, then, against ever cherishing the flattering notion, that fear can exaggerate God's wrath. We tell you, that when fear has done its worst, it can in no degree come up to the wrath which it images. . . . .

Now, it is easy to pass from this view of the text to another, which is in a certain sense similar. You will always find, that men's apprehensions of God's wrath are nicely proportioned to the fear and reverence which are excited in them by the name and the attributes of God. He will have but light thoughts of future vengeance, who has but low thoughts of the character and properties of his Creator: and from this it comes to pass, that the great body of men betray a kind of stupid insensibility to the wrath of Jehovah. . . . . Look at the crowd of the worldly and the indifferent. There is no fear of God in that crowd; they are "of the earth earthy." The soul is sepulchred in the body, and has never wakened to a sense of its position with reference to a holy and avenging Creator. Now, then, you may understand the absence of all knowledge of the power of God's wrath. "*Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*"—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 11.—"*Who knoweth the power of thine anger*"? etc. This he utters, 1. By way of lamentation. He sighing forth a most doleful complaint against the security and stupor he observed in that generation of men in his time, both in those that had already died in their sins, as well as of that new generation that had come up in their room, who still lived in their sins; oh, says he, 'Who of them knoweth the power of thine anger?' namely, of that wrath which followeth after death, and seizeth upon men's souls for ever; that is, who considers it, or regards it, till it take hold upon them? He utters it, 2. In a way of astonishment, out of the apprehension he had of the greatness of that wrath. "*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*" that is, who hath or can take it in according to the greatness of it? which he endeavours to set forth, as applying himself to our own apprehension, in this wise, "*Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*" Where those words, "*thy fear*" are taken *objective*, and so signify the *fear of thee;* and so the meaning is, that according to whatever proportion our souls can take in, in fears of thee and of thine anger, so great is thy wrath itself. You have souls that are able to comprehend vast fears and terrors; they are as extensive in their fears as in their desires, which are stretched beyond what this world or the creatures can afford them, to an infinity. The soul of man is a dark cell, which when it begets fears once, strange and fearful apparitions rise up in it, which far exceed the ordinary proportion of worldly evils (which yet also our fears usually make greater than they prove to be); but here, as to that punishment which is the effect of God's own immediate wrath, let the soul enlarge itself, says he, and

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widen its apprehension to the utmost; fear what you can imagine, yet still God's wrath, and the punishment it inflicts, are not only proportionable, but infinitely exceeding all you can fear or imagine. "*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*" It passeth knowledge.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 12.—"*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*" Moses who was learned in all the sciences of the Egyptians (among which arithmetic was one) desireth to learn this point of arithmetic only of thee, O Lord; and why? Is it because, as Job speaketh, thou hast determined the number of his days? Would Moses have thee reveal to every man the moment of his end? Such speculations may well beseem an Egyptian, an Israelite they do not beseem. Thy children, O Lord, know that it is not for them so to know times and seasons which thou keepest in thine own power, and are a secret sealed up with thee: we should not pry into that counting-house, nor curiously inquire into that sum. It is not then a mathematical numbering of days that Moses would be schooled in, but a moral; he would have God not simply to teach him to number, but to number "*so*"; and "*so*" points out a special manner, a manner that may be useful for the children of God. And indeed our petitions must bear this mark of profitable desires, and we should not ask aught of thee but that by which (if we speed) we may become the better; he that so studies his mortality learns it as he should, and it is only thou, O Lord, that takest him out such a lesson. But what is the use, O Moses, that thou wouldst have man make of such a knowledge? "*Even to apply his heart unto wisdom.*" O happy knowledge, by which a man becomes wise; for wisdom is the beauty of a reasonable soul. God created him therewith, but sin hath divorced the soul and wisdom; so that a sinful man is indeed no better than a fool, so the Scripture calleth him; and well it may call him so, seeing all his carriage is vain, and the upshot of his endeavours but vexation of spirit. But though sin have divorced wisdom and the soul, yet are they not so severed but they may be reunited; and nothing is more powerful in furthering this union than this feeling meditation—that we are mortal.—*Arthur Lake.*

Verse 12.—"*So teach us,*" etc. Moses sends you to God for teaching. "Teach Thou us; not as the world teacheth—teach Thou us." No meaner Master; no inferior school; not Moses himself except as he speaks God's word and becomes the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; not the prophets, not apostles themselves, neither "holy men of old," except as they "spake and were moved by the Holy Ghost." This knowledge comes not from flesh and blood, but from God. "So teach Thou us." And so David says, "Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and I will walk in Thy truth." And hence our Lord's promise to his disciples, "The Holy Ghost, He shall teach you all things."—*Charles Richard Sumner*, 1850.

Verse 12.—"*Teach us to number our days.*" Mark what it is which Moses here prays for, only to be taught to number his days. But did he not do this already? Was it not his daily work this, his constant and continual employment? Yes, doubtless it was; yea, and he did it carefully and conscientiously too. But yet he thought he did it not well enough, and therefore prays here in the text to be taught to do better. See a good man, how little he pleaseth himself in any action of his life, in any performance of duty that he does. He can never think that he does well enough whatever he does, but still desires to do otherwise, and would fain do better. There is an affection of modesty and humility which still accompanies real piety, and every pious man is an humble, modest man, and never reckons himself a perfect proficient, or to be advanced above a teaching, but is content and covetous to be a continual learner; to know more than he knows and to do better than he does; yea, and thinks it no disparagement to his graces at all to take advice, and to seek instruction where it is to be had.—*Edm. Barker's Funeral Sermon for Lady Capell*, 1661.

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Verse 12.—"*Teach us to number our days.*"

"Improve Time in time, while the Time doth last,
For all Time is no time, when the Time is past."

—*From Richard Pigot's "Life of Man, symbolised by the Months of the Year,"* 1866.

Verse 12.—"*Teach us to number our days.*" The proverbial oracles of our parsimonious ancestors have informed us that the fatal waste of fortune is by small expenses, by the profusion of sums too little singly to alarm our caution, and which we never suffer ourselves to consider together. Of the same kind is prodigality of life: he that hopes to look back hereafter with satisfaction upon past years, must learn to know the present value of single minutes, and endeavour to let no particle of time fall useless to the ground. An Italian philosopher expressed in his motto that time was his estate; an estate, indeed, that will produce nothing without cultivation, but will always abundantly repay the labours of industry, and satisfy the most extensive desires, if no part of it be suffered to lie waste by negligence, to be overrun by noxious plants, or laid out for show rather than for use.—*Samuel Johnson.*

Verse 12.—"*To number our days,*" is not simply to take the reckoning and admeasurement of human life. This has been done already in Holy Scripture, where it is said, "*The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*" Nor yet is it, in the world's phrase, to calculate the chances of survivorship, which any man may do in the instance of the aggregate, but which no man can do in the case of the individual. But it is to take the measure of our days as compared with the work to be performed, with the provision to be laid up for eternity, with the preparation to be made for death, with the precaution to be taken against judgment. It is to estimate human life by the purposes to which it should be applied, by the eternity to which it must conduct, and in which it shall at last be absorbed. Under this aspect it is, that David contemplates man when he says, "*Thou hast made our days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee,*" Ps. xxxix. 5; and then proceeds to include in this comprehensive estimate even those whose days have been the longest upon earth: "Verily, every man at his best estate is altogether vanity."—*Thomas Dale,* 1847.

Verse 12.—"*To number our days.*" Number we our days by our daily prayers—number we them by our daily obedience and daily acts of love—number we them by the memories that they bring of holy men who have entered into their Saviour's peace, and by the hopes which are woven with them of glory and of grace won for us!—*Plain Commentary.*

Verse 12.—"*Apply our hearts unto wisdom.*" Sir Thomas Smith, secretary to Queen Elizabeth, some months before his death said, That it was a great pity men know not to what end they were born into this world, until they were ready to go out of it.—*Charles Bradbury.*

Verse 12.—"*Apply our hearts unto wisdom.*" St. Austin says, "We can never do that, except we number every day as our last day." Many put far the evil day. They refuse to leave the earth, when the earth is about to take its leave of them.—*William Secker.*

Verse 12.—"*Apply our hearts unto wisdom.*" Moses speaketh of *wisdom* as if it were physic, which doth no good before it be applied; and the part to apply it to is the *heart*, where all man's affections are to love it and to cherish it, like a kind of hostess. When the heart seeketh it findeth, as though it were brought unto her, like Abraham's ram. Therefore God saith, "They shall seek me and find me, because they shall seek me with their hearts," Jer. xxix. 13; as though they should not find him with all their seeking unless they did seek him with their heart. Therefore the way to get wisdom is to apply your hearts unto it, as if it were your calling and living, to which you were bound 'prentices. A man may apply his ears and his eyes as many truants do to their

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books, and yet never prove scholars; but from that day when a man begins to apply his heart unto wisdom, he learneth more in a month after than he did in a year before, nay, than ever he did in his life. Even as you see the wicked, because they apply their hearts to wickedness, how fast they proceed, how easily and how quickly they become perfect swearers, expert drunkards, cunning deceivers, so if ye could apply your hearts as thoroughly to knowledge and goodness, you might become like the apostle which teacheth you. Therefore, when Solomon sheweth men the way how to come by wisdom, he speaks often of the heart, as, "Give thine heart to wisdom," "let wisdom enter into thine heart," "get wisdom," "keep wisdom," "embrace wisdom," Prov. ii. 10, iv. 5, xiii. 8, as though a man went a wooing for wisdom. Wisdom is like God's daughter, that he giveth to the man that loveth her, and sueth for her, and meaneth to set her at his heart. Thus we have learned how to apply knowledge that it may do us good; not to our ears, like them which hear sermons only, nor to our tongues, like them which make table-talk of religion, but to our hearts, that we may say with the virgin, "My heart doth magnify the Lord," Luke i., and the heart will apply it to the ear and to the tongue, as Christ saith, "*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*," Matt. xii. 34.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 12.—Of all arithmetical rules this is the hardest—*to number our days.* Men can number their herds and droves of oxen and of sheep, they can estimate the revenues of their manors and farms, they can with a little pains number and tell their coins, and yet they are persuaded that their days are infinite and innumerable and therefore do never begin to number them. Who saith not upon the view of another, surely yonder man looketh by his countenance as if he would not live long, or yonder woman is old, her days cannot be many: thus we can number other men's days and years, and utterly forget our own, therefore this is the true wisdom of mortal men, to number their own days.—*Thomas Tymme.*

Verse 12.—Observe here, after that Moses had given us a description of the wrath of God, presently his thoughts are taken up with the meditation of death. The wrath of God thought on makes us think of death. . . . Let us often think of the wrath of God, and let the thought of it so far work upon us, as to keep us in a constant awe and fear of God; and let this fear drive us to God by prayer, that fearing as we ought, we may pray as we are commanded, and praying, we may prevent the wrath of God. If our present sorrows do not move us, God will send greater; and when our sorrows are grown too great for us, we shall have little heart or comfort to pray. Let our fears then quicken our prayers; and let our prayers be such as are able to overcome our fears; so both ways shall we be happy, in that our fears have taught us to pray, and our prayers have made us to fear no more.—*Christopher Shute, in "Ars pié moriendi: or, The true Accomptant. A Sermon," etc.*, 1658.

Verse 12.—It is evident, that the great thing wanted to make men provide for eternity, is the practical persuasion that they have but a short time to live. They will not apply their hearts unto wisdom until they are brought to the numbering of their days. And how are you to be brought, my brethren? The most surprising thing in the text is, that it should be in the form of a prayer. It is necessary that God should interfere to make men number their days. We call this surprising. What! is there not enough to make us feel our frailty, without an actual, supernatural impression? What! are there not lessons enough of that frailty without any new teaching from above? Go into our churchyards—all ages speak to all ranks. Can we need more to prove to us the uncertainty of life? Go into mourning families—and where are they not to be found?—in this it is the old, in that it is the young, whom death has removed—and is there not eloquence in tears to persuade us that we are mortal? Can it be that in treading every day on the dust of our fathers, and meeting every day with funerals of our brethren, we shall not yet be practically taught to number our days, unless God print the truth on our

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hearts, through some special operation of his Spirit? It is not thus in other things. In other things the frequency of the occurrence makes us expect it. The husbandman does not pray to be made believe that the seed must be buried and die before it will germinate. This has been the course of the grain of every one else, and where there is so much experience what room is there for prayer? The mariner does not pray to be taught that the needle of his compass points towards the north. The needle of every compass has so pointed since the secret was discovered, and he has not to ask when he is already so sure. The benighted man does not pray to be made to feel that the sun will rise in a few hours. Morning has succeeded to night since the world was made, and why should he ask what he knows too well to doubt? But in none of these things is there greater room for assurance than we have each one for himself, in regard to its being appointed to him once to die. Nevertheless, we must pray to be made to know—to be made to feel—that we are to die, in the face of an experience which is certainly not less than that of the parties to whom we have referred. This is a petition that we may believe, believe as they do: for they act on their belief in the fact which this experience incontestably attests. And we may say of this, that it is amongst the strangest of the strange things that may be affirmed of human nature, that whilst, in regard to inferior concerns, we can carefully avail ourselves of experience, taking care to register its decisions and to deduce from them rules for our guidance—in the mightiest concern of all we can act as though experience had furnished no evidence, and we were left without matter from which to draw inferences. And, nevertheless, in regard to nothing else is the experience so uniform. The grain does not always germinate—but every man dies. The needle does not always point due north—but every man dies. The sun does not cross the horizon in every place in every twenty-four hours—but every man dies. Yet we must pray—pray as for the revelation of a mystery hidden from our gaze—we must pray to be made to know—to be made to believe—that every man dies! For I call it not belief, and our text calls it not belief, in the shortness of life and the certainty of death, which allows men to live without thought of eternity, without anxiety as to the soul, or without an effort to secure to themselves salvation. I call it not belief—no, no, anything rather than belief. Men are rational beings, beings of forethought, disposed to make provision for what they feel to be inevitable; and if there were not a practical infidelity as to their own mortality, they could not be practically reckless as to their own safety.—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 12.—"*So teach us to number our days,*" etc. Five things I note in these words: first, that death is the haven of every man; whether he sit on the throne, or keep in a cottage, at last he must knock at death's door, as all his fathers have done before him. Secondly, that man's time is set, and his bounds appointed, which he cannot pass, no more than the Egyptians could pass the sea; and therefore Moses saith, "*Teach us to number our days,*" as though there were a number of our days. Thirdly, that our days are few, as though we were sent into this world but to see it; and therefore Moses, speaking of our life, speaks of days, not of years, nor of months, nor of weeks; but "*Teach us to number our days,*" shewing that it is an easy thing even for a man to number his days, they be so few. Fourthly, the aptness of man to forget death rather than anything else; and therefore Moses prayeth the Lord to teach him to number his days, as though they were still slipping out of his mind. Lastly, that to remember how short a time we have to live, will make us apply our hearts to that which is good.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 12.—"*Our hearts.*" In both the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the term "*heart*" is applied alike to the mind that thinks, to the spirit that feels, and the will that acts. And it here stands for the whole mental and moral nature of man, and implies that the whole soul and spirit, with all their might, are to be applied in the service of wisdom.—*William Brown Keer*, 1863.

Verse 12.—"*Wisdom.*" I consider this "*wisdom*" identical with the

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hypostatic *wisdom* described by Solomon, Prov. vii. 15 -31, and ix. 1, 5, even Immanuel, the *wisdom*, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption of his people. The chief pursuit of life should be the attainment of an experimental knowledge of Christ, by whom "kings reign and princes decree justice; whose delights are with the sons of men, and who crieth, Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord; come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled." David in the Psalms, and Solomon, his son, in the Proverbs, have predictively manifested Messiah as the hypostatic *wisdom*, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."—*J. N. Coleman.*

Verse 13.—"*Let it repent thee.*" According to the not unfrequent and well known phraseology of Scripture, God is said to repent, when putting away men's sorrow, and affording new ground of gladness, he appears as it were to be changed.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 14.—"*O satisfy us with thy mercy.*" A poor hungry soul lying under sense of wrath, will promise to itself happiness for ever, if it can but once again find what it hath sometime felt; that is, one sweet fill of God's sensible mercy towards it.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 14.—"*O satisfy us.*" That is everywhere and evermore the cry of humanity. And what a strange cry it is, when you think of it, brethren! Man is the offspring of God; the bearer of his image; he stands at the head of the terrestrial creation; on earth he is peerless; he possesses wondrous capacities of thought, and feeling, and action. The world, and all that is in it, has been formed in a complete and beautiful adaptation to his being. Nature seems to be ever calling to him with a thousand voices, to be glad and rejoice; and yet he is unsatisfied, discontented, miserable! This is a most strange thing—strange, that is, on any theory respecting man's character and condition, but that which is supplied by the Bible; and it is not only a testimony to the ruin of his nature, but also to the insufficiency of everything earthly to meet his cravings —*Charles M. Merry*, 1864.

Verse 14.—"*O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*" We pass now to this particular prayer, and those limbs that make up the body of it. They are many; as many as words in it: satisfy, and satisfy us, and do that early, and do that with that which is thine, and let that be mercy. So that first it is a prayer for fulness and satisfaction,—*satisfy:* and then it is a prayer not only of appropriation to ourselves, satisfy me, but of a charitable dilation and extension to others, satisfy *us*, all us, all thy servants, all thy church; and then thirdly it is a prayer of despatch and expedition, "Satisfy us *early;*" and after that, it is a prayer of evidence and manifestation, satisfy us with that which is, and which we may discern to be *thine;* and then lastly it is a prayer of limitation even upon God himself, that God will take no other way herein but the way of "*mercy.*" "*Satisfy us early with thy mercy.*" . . . . . There is a spiritual fulness in this life of which St. Hierome speaks, *Ebrietas felix, satietas salutaris*, A happy excess and a wholesome surfeit; *quæ quanto copiosius sumitur, majorem donat sobrietatem*, In which the more we eat, the more temperate we are, and the more we drink, the more sober. In which (as St. Bernard also expresses it in his mellifluence) *Mutua interminabili inexplicabili generatione, desiderium generat satietatem, et satietas parit desiderium*, By a mutual and reciprocal, by an undeterminable and inexpressible generation of one another, the desire of spiritual graces begets a satiety, and then this satiety begets a farther desire. This is a holy ambition, a sacred covetousness. Naphtali's blessing, "*O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord,*" Deut. xxxiii. 23; St. Stephen's blessing, "*Full of faith and of the Holy Ghost,*" Acts vi. 5; the blessed Virgin's blessing, "*Full of grace*"; Dorcas' blessing, "*Full of good works and of alms-deeds,*" Acts ix. 36; the blessing of him who is blessed above all, and who blesseth all, even Christ Jesus, "*Full of wisdom, full of the*

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Holy Ghost, full of grace and truth." Luke ii. 40 Luke iv. 1, John i. 14. . . . . "*Satisfy us early with*" that which is thine, "*thy mercy;*" for there are mercies (in a fair extent and accommodation of the word, that is refreshings, eases, deliverances), that are not *his* mercies, nor his satisfactions. . . . . It is not his mercy, except we go by good ways to good ends; except our safety be established by alliance with his friends, except our peace may be had with the perfect continuance of our religion, there is no safety, there is no peace. But let me feel the effect of this prayer, as it is a prayer of manifestation, let me discern that that which is done upon me is done by the hand of God, and I care not what it be, I had rather have God's vinegar, than man's oil, God's wormwood, than man's manna, God's justice, than any man's mercy; for therefore did Gregory Nyssen call St. Basil in a holy sense, Ambidextrum, because he took everything that came by the right handle, and with the right hand, because he saw it come from God. Even afflictions are welcome when we see them to be his: though the way that he would choose, and the way that this prayer entreats, be only mercy, "*Satisfy us early with thy mercy.*"—*John Donne.*

Verse 16.—"*And thy glory unto their children.*" That is to say, that our children may see the glorious fruit of this affliction in us, that so they may not be discouraged thereby to serve thee, but rather the more heartened, when they shall see what a glorious work thou hast wrought in and upon us by afflicting us.—*William Bradshaw.*

Verses 16, 17.—"*Thy work.*" "*The work of our hands.*" You will observe a beautiful parallelism between two things which are sometimes confounded and sometimes too jealously sundered: I mean *God's agency* and *man's instrumentality*, between man's personal activity and that power of God which actuates and animates, and gives it a vital efficacy. For forty years it had been the business of Moses to bring Israel into a right state politically, morally, religiously: *that* had been *his* work. And yet, in so far as it was to have any success or enduringness, it must be God's work. "The work of our hands" do thou establish; and this God does when, in answer to prayer, he adopts the work of his servants, and makes it his own "work," his own "glory," his own "beauty."—*James Hamilton.*

Verses 16, 17.—There is a twofold Rabbinical tradition respecting this verse and the preceding one; that they were the original prayer recited by Moses as a blessing on the work of making the Tabernacle and its ornaments, and that subsequently he employed them as the usual formula of benediction for any newly undertaken task, whenever God's *glorious Majesty* was to be consulted for an answer by Urim and Thummim.—*Lyranus, R. Shelomo, and Genebrardus, quoted by Neale.*

Verses 16, 17.—They were content to live and to die as pilgrims, provided only they could feel that in his sterner dealings with them, God was, however slowly, preparing the way for that display of glorious blessedness which should be the lot of their descendants. In a similar spirit they ask God to establish the work of their hands, though they reckoned not that they should behold its results. Their comfort in sowing was the belief that their children would reap.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verses 16, 17.—It is worthy of notice that this prayer was answered. Though the first generation fell in the wilderness, yet the labours of Moses and his companions were blessed to the second. These were the most devoted to God of any generation that Israel ever saw. It was of them that the Lord said, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase." It was then that Balaam could not curse, but, though desirous of the wages of unrighteousness, was compelled to forego them, and his curse was turned into a blessing. We are taught by this case, amidst temporal calamities and judgments, in which our earthly hopes may be in a manner extinguished, to seek to have the loss

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repaired by spiritual blessings. If God's work does but appear to us, and our posterity after us, we need not be dismayed at the evils which afflict the earth.—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 17.—"*Let the beauty of the* LORD *our God be upon us,*" etc. Let us try to look at our life's work in relation to the Lord's beauty. Our *work* and Divine *Beauty*, at first sight, how different; yet, on deeper insight, how truly *one*, how inseparably united. There is light so beauty-giving, that nothing it touches is positively ugly. In our sea-girt island, with our fickle climate and grey atmosphere, we can only rarely imagine what magic power the serene skies, the balmy air, the sunny atmosphere of the South have over even the least interesting object in nature; but from certain hours, in certain places, I think we may form an idea of the transforming faculty of light.

There is also spiritual light, so beauty-inspiring, that the plainest face within which it is born is illumined with singular loveliness, which wins its way into many a heart. Who of us has not marvelled at an unexpected light, in what we had always thought an uninteresting face? Who has not beheld a light divine irradiate the human countenance, giving joy, and prophesying perfection, where we had least thought to find beauty? May we not take these facts as emblems, albeit faint and imperfect, of what the "*Beauty of the Lord.*" does for us, and our work? You know what the natural light can do for material objects; you know what mental and moral light can work for human faces; rise from these, and know what spiritual light, Divine Light, can do for immortal beings and immortal works.—*Jessie Coombs, in "Thoughts for the Inner Life,"* 1867.

Verse 17.—"*The beauty of the Lord.*" In the word נֹעַם (beauty) there is something like a deluge of grace. Thus far, he says, we have sought thy work, O Lord. There we do nothing, but are only spectators and recipients of thy gifts, we are merely passive. There thou showest thyself to us, and makest us safe, by thy work alone, which thou doest, when thou dost liberate us from that disease which Satan inflicted on the whole human race in Adam, to wit, Sin and Eternal death.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 17.—God is glorified and his work advances when his church is beautiful. "*The beauty of the Lord*" is the beauty of holiness,—that beauty which in the Lord Jesus himself shone with lustre so resplendent, and which ought to be repeated or reflected by every disciple. And it is towards this that all amongst us who love the Saviour, and who long for the extension of his Kingdom, should very mainly direct their endeavours. Nothing can be sadder than when preaching or personal effort is contradicted and neutralized by the low or unlovely lives of those who pass for Christians; and nothing can go further to insure success than when prayer is carried out and preaching is seconded by the pure, holy, and benevolent lives of those who seek to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.—*James Hamilton.*

Verse 17.—"*The work of our hands.*" Jarchi interprets this of the work of the Tabernacle, in which the hands of the Israelites were employed in the wilderness; so Arama of the Tabernacle of Bezaleel.—*John Gill.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—The near and dear relation between God and his people, so that they mutually dwell in each other.

Verse 1.—The abode of the church the same in all ages; her relation to God never changes.

Verse 1.—I. The soul is at home in God. 1. Originally. Its birth-place—its native air—home of its thoughts, will, conscience, affections, desires.

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2. Experimentally. When it returns here it feels itself at home: "Return unto thy rest," etc. 3. Eternally. The soul, once returned to this home, never leaves it: "it shall go no more out for ever." II. The soul is not at home elsewhere. "Our dwelling place," etc. 1. For all men. 2. At all times. He is ever the same, and the wants of the soul substantially are ever the same.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—A Discourse upon the Eternity of God. S. Charnock. Works I. pp. 344—373, Nichol's Edition.

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—The consideration of God's eternity may serve, I. For the support of our faith; in reference to our own condition for the future; in reference to our posterity; and to the condition of God's church to the end of the world. II. For the encouragement of our obedience. We serve the God who can give us an everlasting reward. III. For the terror of wicked men. —*Tillotson's Sermon on the Eternity of God.*

Verse 3.—I. The cause of death—"thou turnest." II. The nature of death —"return." III. The necessities of death—reconciliation with God, and preparation to return.

Verse 4.—I. Contemplate the lengthened period with all its events. II. Consider what He must be to whom all this is as nothing. III. Consider how we stand towards Him.

Verse 5.—Comparison of mortal life to sleep. See William Bradshaw's remarks in our Notes on this verse.

Verses 5, 6.—The lesson of the Meadows. I. Grass growing the emblem of youth. II. Grass flowering—or man in his prime. III. The scythe. IV. Grass mown—or man at death.

Verse 7.—I. Man's chief troubles are the effect of death. 1. His own death. 2. The death of others. II. Death is the effect of Divine anger: "We are consumed by," etc. III. Divine anger is the effect of sin. Death by sin.—*G. R.*

Verse 8.—I. The notice which God takes of sin. 1. Individual. "*Our* iniquities." 2. Universal notice—"iniquities"—not one only, but all. 3. Minute, even the most secret sins. 4. Constant: "Set them before" him—"in the light," etc. II. The notice which we should take of them on that account. 1. In our thoughts. Set them before us. 2. In our consciences. Condemn ourselves on account of them. 3. In our wills. Turn from them by repentance—turn to a pardoning God by faith.—*G. R.*

Verse 9.—I. Every man has a history. His life is as a tale—a separate tale—to be told. II. Every man's history has some display of God in it. All our days, some may say, are passed away in thy wrath—all, others may say, in thy love—and others, some of our days in anger and some in love. III. Every man's history will be told. In death, at judgment, through eternity.—*G. R.*

Verse 10.—I. What life is *to* most. It seldom reaches its natural limits. One half die in childhood; more than half of the other half die in manhood; few attain to old age. II. What life is *at* most. "Threescore years," etc. III. What it is to most beyond that limit. "If by reason," etc. IV. What it is to all. "It is soon cut off," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 11.—I. The anger of God against sin is not fully known by its effects in this life. "Who knoweth the power," etc. Here we see the hidings of its power. II. The anger of God against sin hereafter is equal to our greatest fears. "According to thy fear," etc.; or, "the fear of thee," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 12.—I. The Reckoning. 1. What their usual number. 2. How many of them are already spent. 3. How uncertain the number that remains. 4. How much of them must be occupied with the necessary duties of this life. 5. What afflictions and helplessness may attend them. II. The use to be made of it. 1. To "seek wisdom"—not riches, worldly honours, or pleasures—but wisdom; not the wisdom of the world, but of God. 2. To "apply the heart" to it. Not mental merely, but moral wisdom; not speculative merely, but experimental; not theoretical merely, but practical. 3. To seek it at once—immediately. 4. To seek it constantly—"*apply* our hearts," etc. III. The help to be sought in it. "So teach us," etc. 1. Our own ability is insufficient

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through the perversion both of the mind and heart by sin. 2. Divine help may be obtained. "If any man lack wisdom." etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 12.—The Sense of Mortality. Show the variety of blessings dispensed to different classes by the right use of the sense of mortality. I. It may be an antidote for the sorrowful. Reflect, "there is an end." II. It should be a restorative to the labouring. III. It should be a remedy for the impatient. IV. As a balm to the wounded in heart. V. As a corrective for the worldly. VI. As a sedative to the frivolous.—*R. Andrew Griffin, in "Stems and Twigs,"* 1872.

Verse 13.—In what manner the Lord may be said to repent.

Verse 14 (*first clause*).—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 518: "The Young Man's Prayer."

Verse 14.—I. The deepest yearning of man is for satisfaction. II. Satisfaction can only be found in the realization of Divine Mercy.—*C. M. Merry*, 1864.

Verse 14.—"*O satisfy us early with thy mercy*," etc. Learn, 1. That our souls can have no solid satisfaction in earthly things. 2. That the mercy of God alone can satisfy our souls. 3. That nothing but satisfaction in God can fill our days with joy and gladness.—*John Cawood*, 1842.

Verse 14.—I. The most cheerful days of earth are made more cheerful by thoughts of Divine mercy. II. The most sorrowful days of earth are made glad by the consciousness of Divine love.—*G. R.*

Verse 15.—I. The joy of faith is in proportion to the sorrow of repentance. II. The joy of consolation is in proportion to suffering in affliction. III. The joy of the returning smiles of God is in proportion to the terror of his frowns.—*G. R.*

Verse 15.—The Balance of life, or the manner in which our joys are set over against our sorrows.

Verse 16.—I. Our duty—"work," and our desire about it. II. Our children's portion—"glory," and our prayer in reference to it.

Verse 17.—The Right Establishment, or the work which will endure—why it will endure and should endure. Why we wish our work to be of such a nature, and whether there are enduring elements in it.

WORKS UPON THE NINETIETH PSALM.

Enarratio Psalmi XC. Per D. Doctorem Martinum Luth. In Scholâ Vuittembergensi, Anno, 1534, *publice absoluta, edita vero Anno MD. XLI.* [In Vol. IV. of the Jena edition of Luther's Works, 1712 and other years, folio.]

A Meditation of Man's Mortalitie. Containing an Exposition of the Ninetieth Psalme. By that Reuerend and Religious Seruant of God Mr. William Bradshaw, sometime Fellow of Sidney Colledge in Cambridge. Published since his decease by Thomas Gataker B. of D. and Pastor of Rotherhith. London. . . 1621.

Moses his Prayer. Or, An Exposition of the Ninetieth Psalme. In which is set forth, the Frailty and Misery of Mankind: most needfull for these Times.

Wherein
1. The Sum and Scope.
2. The Doctrines.
3. The Reasons.
4. The uses of most Texts are observed.

By *Samuel Smith*, Minister of the Gospel, Author of *David's Repentance* and the *Great Assize*, and yet Living. . . . 1656.

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PSALM XCI.

This Psalm is without a title, and we have no means of ascertaining either the name of its writer, or the date of its composition, with certainty. The Jewish doctors consider that when the author's name is not mentioned we may assign the Psalm to the last-named writer; and, if so, this is another Psalm of Moses, the man of God. Many expressions here used are similar to those of Moses in Deuteronomy, and the internal evidence, from the peculiar idioms, would point towards him as the composer. The continued lives of Joshua and Caleb, who followed the Lord fully, make remarkably apt illustrations of this Psalm, for they, as a reward for abiding in continued nearness to the Lord, lived on "amongst the dead, amid their graves." For these reasons it is by no means improbable that this Psalm may have been written by Moses, but we dare not dogmatize. If David's pen was used in giving us this matchless ode, we cannot believe as some do that he thus commemorated the plague which devastated Jerusalem on account of his numbering the people. For him, then, to sing of himself as seeing "the reward of the wicked" would be clean contrary to his declaration, "I have sinned, but these sheep, what have they done?"; and the absence of any allusion to the sacrifice upon Zion could not be in any way accounted for, since David's repentance would inevitably have led him to dwell upon the atoning sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood by the hyssop.

In the whole collection there is not a more cheering Psalm, its tone is elevated and sustained throughout, faith is at its best, and speaks nobly. A German physician was wont to speak of it as the best preservative in times of cholera, and in truth it is a heavenly medicine against plague and pest. He who can live in its spirit will be fearless, even if once again London should become a lazar-house, and the grave be gorged with carcases.

DIVISION.—*On this occasion we shall follow the divisions which our translators have placed at the head of the Psalm, for they are pithy and suggestive.* 1. *The state of the godly.* 3. *Their safety.* 9. *Their habitation.* 11. *Their servants.* 14. *Their friend; with the effects of them all.*

EXPOSITION.

HE that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

2 I will say of the LORD, *He is* my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

1. "*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High.*" The blessings here promised are not for all believers, but for those who live in close fellowship with God. Every child of God looks towards the inner sanctuary and the mercy-seat, yet all do not *dwell* in the most holy place; they run to it at times, and ~~o~~joy occasional approaches, but they do not habitually reside in the mysterious presence. Those who through rich grace obtain unusual and continuous communion with God, so as to abide in Christ and Christ in them, become possessors of rare and special benefits, which are missed by those who follow afar off, and grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Into the secret place those only come who know the love of God in Christ Jesus, and those only *dwell* there to whom to live is Christ. To them the veil is rent, the mercy-seat is revealed, the covering cherubs are manifest, and the awful glory of the Most High is apparent: these, like Simeon, have the Holy Ghost upon them, and like Anna they depart not from the temple; they are the courtiers of the Great King, the valiant men who keep watch around the bed of Solomon, the virgin souls who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Elect out of the elect, they have "attained unto the first three," and shall walk with their Lord in white, for they are worthy. Sitting down in the august presence-chamber where shines the mystic

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light of the Sheckinah, they know what it is to be raised up together, and to be made to sit together with Christ in the heavenlies, and of them it is truly said that their conversation is in heaven. Special grace like theirs brings with it special immunity. Outer court worshippers little know what belongs to the inner sanctuary, or surely they would press on until the place of nearness and divine familiarity became theirs. Those who are the Lord's constant guests shall find that he will never suffer any to be injured within his gates; he has eaten the covenant salt with them, and is pledged for their protection.

"*Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*" The Omnipotent Lord will shield all those who dwell with him, they shall remain under his care as guests under the protection of their host. In the most holy place the wings of the cherubim were the most conspicuous objects, and they probably suggested to the psalmist the expression here employed. Those who commune with God are safe with Him, no evil can reach them, for the outstretched wings of his power and love cover them from all harm. This protection is constant—they *abide* under it, and it is all-sufficient, for it is the shadow of *the Almighty*, whose omnipotence will surely screen them from all attack. No shelter can be imagined at all comparable to the protection of Jehovah's own shadow. The Almighty himself is where his shadow is, and hence those who dwell in his secret place are shielded by himself. What a shade in the day of noxious heat! What a refuge in the hour of deadly storm! Communion with God is safety. The more closely we cling to our Almighty Father the more confident may we be.

2. "*I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress.*" To take up a general truth and make it our own by personal faith is the highest wisdom. It is but poor comfort to say 'the Lord is a refuge,' but to say he is *my* refuge, is the essence of consolation. Those who believe should also speak —"I will *say*," for such bold avowals honour God and lead others to seek the same confidence. Men are apt enough to proclaim their doubts, and even to boast of them, indeed there is a party nowadays of the most audacious pretenders to culture and thought, who glory in casting suspicion upon every thing: hence it becomes the duty of all true believers to speak out and testify with calm courage to their own well-grounded reliance upon their God. Let others say what they will, be it ours to say of the Lord, "he is our *refuge*." But what we say we must prove by our actions, we must fly to the Lord for shelter, and not to an arm of flesh. The bird flies away to the thicket, and the fox hastens to its hole, every creature uses its refuge in the hour of danger, and even so in all peril or fear of peril let us flee unto Jehovah, the Eternal Protector of his own. Let us, when we are secure in the Lord, rejoice that our position is unassailable, for he is our *fortress* as well as our refuge. No moat, portcullis, drawbridge, wall, battlement and donjohn, could make us so secure as we are when the attributes of the Lord of Hosts environ us around. Behold this day the Lord is to us instead of walls and bulwarks! Our ramparts defy the leagured hosts of hell. Foes in flesh, and foes in ghostly guise are alike baulked of their prey when the Lord of Hosts stands between us and their fury, and all other evil forces are turned aside. Walls cannot keep out the pestilence, but the Lord can.

As if it were not enough to call the Lord his refuge and fortress, he adds, "*My God! in him will I trust.*" Now he can say no more; "my God" means all, and more than all, that heart can conceive by way of security. It was most meet that he should say "in him will I trust," since to deny faith to such a one were wilful wickedness and wanton insult. He who dwells in an impregnable fortress, naturally trusts in it; and shall not he who dwells in God feel himself well at ease, and repose his soul in safety? O that we more fully carried out the psalmist's resolve! We have trusted in God, let us trust him still. He has never failed us, why then should we suspect him? To trust in man is natural to fallen nature, to trust in God should be as natural to regenerated nature. Where there is every reason and warrant for faith, we

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ought to place our confidence without hesitancy or wavering. Dear reader, pray for grace to say, "In *Him* will I trust."

3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, *and* from the noisome pestilence.

4 He shall cover thee with feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler.

5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor* for the destruction *that* flieth by day.

6 *Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness; *nor* for the destruction *that* wasteth at noon-day.

7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; *but* it shall not come nigh thee.

8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

3. "*Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.*" Assuredly no subtle plot shall succeed against one who has the eyes of God watching for his defence. We are foolish and weak as poor little birds, and are very apt to be lured to our destruction by cunning foes, but if we dwell near to God, he will see to it that the most skilful deceiver shall not entrap us.

> "Satan the fowler who betrays
> Unguarded souls a thousand ways,"

shall be foiled in the case of the man whose high and honourable condition consists in residence within the holy place of the Most High. "*And from the noisome pestilence.*" He who is a Spirit can protect us from evil spirits, he who is mysterious can rescue us from mysterious dangers, he who is immortal can redeem us from mortal sickness. There is a deadly pestilence of error, we are safe from that if we dwell in communion with the God of truth; there is a fatal pestilence of sin, we shall not be infected by it if we abide with the thrice Holy One; there is also a pestilence of disease, and even from that calamity our faith shall win immunity if it be of that high order which abides in God, walks on in calm serenity, and ventures all things for duty's sake. Faith by cheering the heart keeps it free from the fear which, in times of pestilence, kills more than the plague itself. It will not in all cases ward off disease and death, but where the man is such as the first verse describes, it will assuredly render him immortal where others die; if all the saints are not so sheltered it is because they have not all such a close abiding with God, and consequently not such confidence in the promise. Such special faith is not given to all, for there are diversities in the measure of faith. It is not of all believers that the psalmist sings, but only of those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High. Too many among us are weak in faith, and in fact place more reliance in a phial or a globule than in the Lord and giver of life, and if we die of pestilence as others die it is because we acted like others, and did not in patience possess our souls. The great mercy is that in such a case our deaths are blessed, and it is well with us, for we are for ever with the Lord. Pestilence to the saints shall not be noisome but the messenger of heaven.

4. "*He shall cover thee with thy feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust.*" A wonderful expression! Had it been invented by an uninspired man it would have verged upon blasphemy, for who should dare to apply such words to the Infinite Jehovah? But as he himself authorised, yea, dictated the language, we have here a transcendent condescension, such as it becomes us to admire and adore. Doth the Lord speak of his feathers, as though he likened himself to a bird? Who will not see herein a matchless love, a divine tenderness, which should both woo and win our confidence? Even as a hen covereth her chickens so doth the Lord protect the souls which dwell in him;

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let us cower down beneath him for comfort and for safety. Hawks in the sky and snares in the field are equally harmless when we nestle so near the Lord. "*His truth*"—his true promise, and his faithfulness to his promise, "*shall be thy shield and buckler.*" Double armour has he who relies upon the Lord. He bears a shield and wears an all-surrounding coat of mail—such is the force of the word "buckler." To quench fiery darts the truth is a most effectual shield, and to blunt all swords it is an equally effectual coat of mail. Let us go forth to battle thus harnessed for the war, and we shall be safe in the thickest of the fight. It has been so, and so shall it be till we reach the land of peace, and there among the "helmed cherubim and sworded seraphim," we will wear no other ornament, his truth shall still be our shield and buckler.

5. "*Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night.*" Such frail creatures are we that both by night and by day we are in danger, and so sinful are we that in either season we may be readily carried away by fear; the promise before us secures the favourite of heaven both from danger and from the fear of it. Night is the congenial hour of horrors, when alarms walk abroad like beasts of prey, or ghouls from among the tombs; our fears turn the sweet season of repose into one of dread, and though angels are abroad and fill our chambers, we dream of demons and dire visitants from hell. Blessed is that communion with God which renders us impervious to midnight frights, and horrors born of darkness. Not to be afraid is in itself an unspeakable blessing, since for every suffering which we endure from real injury we are tormented by a thousand griefs which arise from fear only. The shadow of the Almighty removes all gloom from the shadow of night: once covered by the divine wing, we care not what winged terrors may fly abroad in the earth. "*Nor for the arrow that flieth by day.*" Cunning foes lie in ambuscade, and aim the deadly shaft at our hearts, but we do not fear them, and have no cause to do so. That arrow is not made which can destroy the righteous, for the Lord hath said, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." In times of great danger those who have made the Lord their refuge, and therefore have refused to use the carnal weapon, have been singularly preserved; the annals of the Quakers bear good evidence to this; yet probably the main thought is, that from the cowardly attacks of crafty malice those who walk by faith shall be protected, from cunning heresies they shall be preserved, and in sudden temptations they shall be secured from harm. Day has its perils as well as night, arrows more deadly than those poisoned by the Indian are flying noiselessly through the air, and we shall be their victims unless we find both shield and buckler in our God. O believer, dwell under the shadow of the Lord, and none of the archers shall destroy thee, they may shoot at thee and wound thee grievously, but thy bow shall abide in strength. When Satan's quiver shall be empty thou shalt remain uninjured by his craft and cruelty, yea, his broken darts shall be to thee as trophies of the truth and power of the Lord thy God.

6. "*Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness.*" It is shrouded in mystery as to its cause and cure, it marches on, unseen of men, slaying with hidden weapons, like an enemy stabbing in the dark, yet those who dwell in God are not afraid of it. Nothing is more alarming than the assassin's plot, for he may at any moment steal in upon a man, and lay him low at a stroke; and such is the plague in the days of its power, none can promise themselves freedom from it for an hour in any place in the infected city; it enters a house men know not how, and its very breath is mortal; yet those choice souls who dwell in God shall live above fear in the most plague-stricken places—they *shall not be afraid of the "plagues which in the darkness walk."* "*Nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.*" Famine may starve, or bloody war devour, earthquake may overturn and tempest may smite, but amid all, the man who has sought the mercy seat and is sheltered beneath the wings which overshadow it, shall abide in perfect peace. Days of horror and nights of terror are for other men, his days and nights are alike spent with God, and therefore pass away in sacred quiet. His peace is not a thing of times and

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seasons, it does not rise and set with the sun, nor does it depend upon the healthiness of the atmosphere or the security of the country. Upon the child of the Lord's own heart pestilence has no destroying power, and calamity no wasting influence: pestilence walks in darkness, but he dwells in light; destruction wastes at noonday, but upon him another sun has risen whose beams bring restoration. Remember that the voice which saith "thou shalt not fear" is that of God himself, who hereby pledges his word for the safety of those who abide under his shadow, nay, not for their safety only, but for their serenity. So far shall they be from being injured that they shall not even be made to fear the ills which are around them, since the Lord protects them.

> "He, his shadowy plumes outspread,
> With his wing shall fence thy head;
> And his truth around thee wield,
> Strong as targe or bossy shield!
> Naught shall strike thee with dismay,
> Fear by night, nor shaft by day."

7. "*A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand.*" So terribly may the plague rage among men that the bills of mortality may become very heavy and continue to grow ten times heavier still, yet shall such as this Psalm speaks of survive the scythe of death. "*It shall not come nigh thee.* It shall be so near as to be at thy side, and yet not nigh enough to touch thee; like a fire it shall burn all around, yet shall not the smell of it pass upon thee. How true is this of the plague of moral evil, of heresy, and of backsliding. Whole nations are infected, yet the man who communes with God is not affected by the contagion; he holds the truth when falsehood is all the fashion. Professors all around him are plague-smitten, the church is wasted, the very life of religion decays, but in the same place and time, in fellowship with God, the believer renews his youth, and his soul knows no sickness. In a measure this also is true of physical evil; the Lord still puts a difference between Israel and Egypt in the day of his plagues. Sennacherib's army is blasted, but Jerusalem is in health.

> "Our God his chosen people saves
> Amongst the dead, amidst the graves."

8. "*Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.*" The sight shall reveal both the justice and the mercy of God; in them that perish the severity of God will be manifest, and in the believer's escape the richness of divine goodness will be apparent. Joshua and Caleb verified this promise. The Puritan preachers during the plague of London must have been much impressed with this verse as they came out of their hiding-places to proclaim mercy and judgment to the dissolute age which was so sorely visited with the pest. The sight of God's judgments softens the heart, excites a solemn awe, creates gratitude, and so stirs up the deepest kind of adoration. It is such a sight as none of us would wish to see, and yet if we did see it we might thus be lifted up to the very noblest style of manhood. Let us but watch providence, and we shall find ourselves living in a school where examples of the ultimate reward of sin are very plentiful. One case may not be judged alone lest we misjudge, but instances of divine visitation will be plentiful in the memory of any attentive observer of men and things; from all these put together we may fairly draw conclusions, and unless we shut our eyes to that which is self-evident, we shall soon perceive that there is after all a moral ruler over the sons of men, who sooner or later rewards the ungodly with due punishment.

9 Because thou hast made the LORD *which is* my refuge, even the most high, thy habitation;

10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

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9, 10. Before expounding these verses I cannot refrain from recording a personal incident illustrating their power to soothe the heart, when they are applied by the Holy Spirit. In the year 1854, when I had scarcely been in London twelve months, the neighbourhood in which I laboured was visited by Asiatic cholera, and my congregation suffered from its inroads. Family after family summoned me to the bedside of the smitten, and almost every day I was called to visit the grave. I gave myself up with youthful ardour to the visitation of the sick, and was sent for from all corners of the district by persons of all ranks and religions. I became weary in body and sick at heart. My friends seemed falling one by one, and I felt or fancied that I was sickening like those around me. A little more work and weeping would have laid me low among the rest; I felt that my burden was heavier than I could bear, and I was ready to sink under it. As God would have it, I was returning mournfully home from a funeral, when my curiosity led me to read a paper which was wafered up in a shoemaker's window in the Dover Road. It did not look like a trade announcement, nor was it, for it bore in a good bold handwriting these words:—"*Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.*" The effect upon my heart was immediate. Faith appropriated the passage as her own. I felt secure, refreshed, girt with immortality. I went on with my visitation of the dying in a calm and peaceful spirit; I felt no fear of evil, and I suffered no harm. The providence which moved the tradesman to place those verses in his window I gratefully acknowledge, and in the remembrance of its marvellous power I adore the Lord my God.

The psalmist in these verses assures the man who dwells in God that he shall be secure. Though faith claims no merit of its own, yet the Lord rewards it wherever he sees it. He who *makes* God his refuge shall find him a refuge; he who dwells in God shall find his dwelling protected. We must *make* the Lord our habitation by choosing him for our trust and rest, and then we shall receive immunity from harm; no evil shall touch us personally, and no stroke of judgment shall assail our household. The *dwelling* here intended by the original was only a tent, yet the frail covering would prove to be a sufficient shelter from harm of all sorts. It matters little whether our abode be a gipsey's hut or a monarch's palace if the soul has made the Most High its habitation. Get into God and you dwell in all good, and ill is banished far away. It is not because we are perfect or highly esteemed among men that we can hope for shelter in the day of evil, but because our refuge is the Eternal God, and our faith has learned to hide beneath his sheltering wing.

> "For this no ill thy cause shall daunt,
> No scourge thy tabernacle haunt."

It is impossible that any ill should happen to the man who is beloved of the Lord; the most crushing calamities can only shorten his journey and hasten him to his reward. Ill to him is no ill, but only good in a mysterious form. Losses enrich him, sickness is his medicine, reproach is his honour, death is his gain. No evil in the strict sense of the word can happen to him, for everything is overruled for good. Happy is he who is in such a case. He is secure where others are in peril, he lives where others die.

11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

12 They shall bear thee up in *their* hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

13 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

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11. "*For he shall give his angels charge over thee.*" Not one guardian angel, as some fondly dream, but all the angels are here alluded to. They are the body-guard of the princes of the blood imperial of heaven, and they have received commission from their Lord and ours to watch carefully over all the interests of the faithful. When men have a charge they become doubly careful, and therefore the angels are represented as bidden by God himself to see to it that the elect are secured. It is down in the marching orders of the hosts of heaven that they take special note of the people who dwell in God. It is not to be wondered at that the servants are bidden to be careful of the comfort of their Master's guests; and we may be quite sure that when they are specially charged by the Lord himself they will carefully discharge the duty imposed upon them. "*To keep thee in all thy ways.*" To be a body-guard, a garrison to the body, soul, and spirit of the saint. The limit of this protection "in all thy ways" is yet no limit to the heart which is right with God. It is not the way of the believer to go out of his way. He keeps in the way, and then the angels keep him. The protection here promised is exceeding broad as to place, for it refers to *all* our ways, and what do we wish for more? How angels thus keep us we cannot tell. Whether they repel demons, counteract spiritual plots, or even ward off the subtler physical forces of disease, we do not know. Perhaps we shall one day stand amazed at the multiplied services which the unseen bands have rendered to us.

12. "*They,*" that is the angels, God's own angels, shall cheerfully become our servitors. "*They shall bear thee up in their hands*"; as nurses carry little children, with careful love, so shall those glorious spirits upbear each individual believer. "*Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone;*" even minor ills they ward off. It is most desirable that we should not stumble, but as the way is rough, it is most gracious on the Lord's part to send his servants to bear us up above the loose pebbles. If we cannot have the way smoothed it answers every purpose if we have angels to bear us up in their hands. Since the greatest ills may arise out of little accidents, it shews the wisdom of the Lord that from the smaller evils we are protected.

13. "*Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder.*" Over force and fraud shalt thou march victoriously; bold opponents and treacherous adversaries shall alike be trodden down. When our shoes are iron and brass lions and adders are easily enough crushed beneath our heel. "*The young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.*" The strongest foe in power, and the most mysterious in cunning, shall be conquered by the man of God. Not only from stones in the way, but from serpents also, shall we be safe. To men who dwell in God the most evil forces become harmless, they wear a charmed life, and defy the deadliest ills. Their feet come into contact with the wor t of foes, even Satan himself nibbles at their heel, but in Christ Jesus they have the assured hope of bruising Satan under their feet shortly. The people of God are the real "George and the dragon," the true lion-kings and serpent-tamers. Their dominion over the powers of darkness makes them cry, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy word."

14 Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I *will be* with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

16 With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

14. Here we have the Lord himself speaking of his own chosen one. "*Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him.*" Not because he deserves to be thus kept, but because with all his imperfections he does love

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his God; therefore not the angels of God only, but the God of angels himself will come to his rescue in all perilous times, and will effectually deliver him. When the heart is enamoured of the Lord, all taken up with him, and intensely attached to him, the Lord will recognise the sacred flame, and preserve the man who bears it in his bosom. It is love,—love set upon God, which is the distinguishing mark of those whom the Lord secures from ill. "*I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.*" The man has known the attributes of God so as to trust in him, and then by experience has arrived at a yet deeper knowledge, this shall be regarded by the Lord as a pledge of his grace, and he will set the owner of it above danger or fear, where he shall dwell in peace and joy. None abide in intimate fellowship with God unless they possess a warm affection towards God, and an intelligent trust in him; these gifts of grace are precious in Jehovah's eyes, and wherever he sees them he smiles upon them. How elevated is the standing which the Lord gives to the believer. We ought to covet it right earnestly. If we climb on high it may be dangerous, but if God sets us there it is glorious.

15. "*He shall call upon me, and I will answer him.*" He will have need to pray, he will be led to pray aright and the answer shall surely come. Saints are first called *of* God and then they call *upon* God; such calls as theirs always obtain answers. Not without prayer will the blessing come to the most favoured, but by means of prayer they shall receive all good things. "*I will be with him in trouble,*" or "I *am* with him in trouble." Heirs of heaven are conscious of a special divine presence in times of severe trial. God is always near in sympathy and in power to help his tried ones. "*I will deliver him, and honour him.*" The man honours God, and God honours him. Believers are not delivered or preserved in a way which lowers them, and makes them feel themselves degraded; far from it, the Lord's salvation bestows honour upon those it delivers. God first gives us conquering grace, and then rewards us for it.

16. "*With long life will I satisfy him.*" The man described in this Psalm fills out the measure of his days, and whether he dies young or old he is quite satisfied with life, and is content to leave it. He shall rise from life's banquet as a man who has had enough, and would not have more even if he could. "*And shew him my salvation.*" The full sight of divine grace shall be his closing vision. He shall look from Amana and Lebanon. Not with destruction before him black as night, but with salvation bright as noonday smiling upon him he shall enter into his rest.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The Talmud writers ascribe not only the ninety-first Psalm, but the nine ensuing, to the pen of Moses; but from a rule which will in no respect hold, that all the psalms which are without the name of an author in their respective titles are the production of the poet whose name is given in the nearest preceding title. And though it is impossible to prove that this highly beautiful ode was not written by David, the general drift of its scenery and allusions rather concur in showing that, like the last, we are indebted for it to the muse of Moses; that it was composed by him during the journey through the wilderness, shortly after the plague of the fiery serpents; when the children of Israel, having returned to a better spirit, were again received into the favour of JEHOVAH. Besides political enemies, the children of Israel in the wilderness had other evils in great numbers to encounter, from the nature and diseases of the climate, which exposed them to coups de soleil, or *sun smitings*, during the heat of the day; and to pestilential vapours, *moon smitings*, during the damp of the night, so as to render the miraculous canopy of the cloud that hung over them in the former season, and the miraculous column of fire that cheered and purified them in the latter, equally needful and refreshing. In

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Egypt, they had seen so much of the plague, and they had been so fearfully threatened with it as a punishment for disobedience, that they could not but be in dread of its reappearance, from the incessant fatigues of their journeying. In addition to all which, they had to be perpetually on their guard against the insidious attacks of the savage monsters and reptiles of "that great and terrible wilderness," as Moses describes it on another occasion, "wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought; where there was no water" (Deut. viii. 15); and where, also, as we learn from other parts of Scripture, bears, lions, leopards or tigers, and "the wolf of the evening," as Jeremiah has beautifully expressed it, prowled without restraint. Now in the Psalm before us, and especially in the verses 6 to 13, we have so clear and graphic a description of the whole of these evils presented to us, as to bring its composition directly home to the circumstances and the period here pitched upon and to render it at least needless to hunt out for any other occasion.—*J. M. Good's "Historical Outline of the Book of Psalms,"* 1842.

Whole Psalm.—It is one of the most excellent works of this kind which has ever appeared. It is impossible to imagine anything more solid, more beautiful, more profound, or more ornamented. Could the Latin or any modern language express thoroughly all the beauties and elegancies as well of the *words* as of the *sentences*, it would not be difficult to persuade the reader that we have no poem, either in *Greek* or *Latin*, comparable to this Hebrew ode.—*Simon de Muis.*

Whole Psalm.—Psalm XC. spoke of man withering away beneath God's anger against sin. Psalm XCI. tells of a Man, who is able to tread the lion and adder under His feet.—Undoubtedly the Tempter was right in referring this Psalm to "the Son of God" (Matthew iv. 6).

The imagery of the Psalm seems to be in part drawn from that Passover Night, when the Destroying Angel passed through Egypt, while the faithful and obedient Israelites were sheltered by God.—*William Kay.*

Verse 1.—"*He,*" no matter who he may be, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, patrician or plebeian, young or old, for "God is no respecter of persons," but "he is rich to all that call upon him."—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 1.—"*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High.*" Note, he who dwells in the secret place of the Most High is not he that conjures up one or two slight and fleeting acts of hope in Him, but the man that places in Him an assiduous and constant confidence. In this way he establishes for himself in God by that full trust, a home, a dwelling-place, a mansion, ... The Hebrew for *he that dwelleth*, is יֹשֵׁב, that is, dwelling in quietude, and resting, enduring and remaining with constancy.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 1.—"*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High.*" What intimate and unrestrained communion does this describe!—the Christian in everything making known his heart, with its needs and wishes, its thoughts and feelings, its doubts and anxieties, its sorrows and its joys, to God, as to a loving, perfect friend. And all is not on one side. This Almighty Friend has admitted his chosen one to his "*secret place.*" It is almost too wonderful to be true. It is almost too presumptuous a thought for such creatures as we are to entertain. But He himself permits it, *desires* it, teaches us to realise that it is *communion* to which he calls us. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." And what is this "*secret*"? It is *that* in God which the world neither knows, nor sees, nor cares to enjoy. It is his mind revealed to those that love him, his plans, and ways ("He made known his *ways* to *Moses*," Ps. ciii. 7), and thoughts opened to them. Yea, and things hid from angels are manifest to the least of his friends (1 Peter i. 12). He wishes us to know him, and by his Word and by his Spirit he puts himself before us. Ah! it is not his fault if we do not know him. It is our own carelessness.—*Mary B. M. Duncan, in "Under the Shadow,"* 1867.

Verse 1.—By "*secret*" here is meant a place of refuge from the storms of the world under the secret of his providence, who careth for all his children.

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Also, by the "*secret of the most High*," some writers understand the castle of his mighty defence, to which his people run, being pursued by enemies, as the wild creature doth to his hole or den for succour, when the hunter hath him in chase, and the dogs are near. This then being the meaning of that which the prophet calleth the "*secret place of the most High*," and our dwelling in it, by confidence in him; we learn, in all troubles, to cleave to *God* chiefly or only for help, and to *means* but as underlings to his providence. . . . . .

That which is here translated "*dwelleth*," is as much in weight as sitteth, or is settled; and so, our dwelling in God's secret, is as much as our sitting down in it: the meaning is, we must make it our rest, as if we should say, Here will we dwell. From whence we learn, that God's children should not come to God's *secret-place* as guests to an inn, but as inhabitants to their own dwellings; that is, they should continue to trust in God, as well in want as in fulness; and as much when they *wither* in their root, as when they *flourish* in it.—*Robert Horn.*

Verse 1.—"*He that dwelleth*," etc. 1. "He dwells," therefore he shall "abide." He shall lodge quietly, securely. 2. "He dwells in the secret place," therefore he shall "abide under the shadow." In the cool, the favour, the cover from the heat 3. "He dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, therefore he shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty;" *i.e.*, of the all-powerful God, of the God of heaven; of that God whose name is Shaddai, All-sufficient.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1.—"*Shall abide.*" The Hebrew for "*shall abide*" is יִתְלוֹנָן, which signifies, *he shall pass the night.* Abiding denotes a constant and continuous dwelling of the just in the assistance and protection of God. That help and protection of God is not like a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, or in a vineyard; which is destroyed in a moment, nor is it like a tent in the way which is abandoned by the traveller. It is a strong tower, a paternal home, wherein we spend all our life with the best, wealthiest, and mightiest of parents. *Passing the night* also denotes security and rest in time of darkness, temptations and calamities. With God Abraham passed the night, when He foretold to him the affliction of his descendants in Egypt, and their deliverance, Gen. xv. 12 seq. Then also God said to him (verse 1,) *Fear not Abram. I am thy shield.* And leading him forth he showed him the glittering stars, and said, Tell the number of the stars, if thou be able; so shall thy seed be.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 1.—"*The shadow.*" The allusion of this verse may be to the awful and mystic symbols of the ark. Under the ancient ceremony, the high priest only could enter, and that but once a year, into the holy place, where stood the emblems of the divine glory and presence; but under the present bright and merciful dispensation, every true believer has access, with boldness, into the holiest of all; and he who now dwelleth in the secret place of prayer and communion with the God of salvation, shall find the divine mercy and care spread over him for his daily protection and solace.—*John Morison.*

Verse 1.—"*Under the shadow of the Almighty.*" This is an expression which implies great nearness. We must walk very close to a companion, if we would have his shadow fall on us. Can we imagine any expression more perfect in describing the *constant presence* of God with his chosen ones, than this—they shall "*abide under his shadow*"? In Solomon's beautiful allegory, the Church in a time of special communion with Christ, says of him—"I sat down under his shadow with great delight" (Cant. ii. 3)—"sat down," desiring not to leave it, but to abide there for ever. And it is he who chooses to dwell in the secret place of the most High, who shall "abide under the shadow of the Almighty." There is a condition and a promise attached to it. The condition is, that we "dwell in the secret place,"—the promise, that if we do so we "shall abide under the shadow." It is of importance to view it thus. For when we remember the blessing is a *promised* blessing—we are led to feel it is a gift—a thing therefore to be prayed for in faith, as well as sought for by God's appointed means. Ah, the hopes that *this* awakens! My wandering, wavering,

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unstable heart, that of itself cannot keep to one course two days together is to seek its perseverance from God, and not in its own strength. He will hold it to him if it be but seeking for stedfastness. It is not we who cling to him. It is he who keeps near to us.—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verses 1—4; 9.—O you that be in fear of any danger, leave all carnal shifts, and carking counsels, and projects, and dwell in the rock of God's power and providence, and be like the dove that nestles in the holes of the rock; by faith betake yourselves unto God, by faith dwell in that rock, and there nestle yourselves, make your nests of safety in the clefts of this rock. But how may we do this thing, and what is the way to do it Do this,—Set thy faith on work to make God that unto thee which thy necessity requires, pitch and throw thyself upon his power and providence, with a resolution of spirit to rest thyself upon it for safety, come what will come. See an excellent practice of this, Ps. xci. 1, "*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty;*" that is, he shall be safe from all fears and dangers. Ay, that is true, you will say, who makes any doubt of it? But how shall a man come to dwell, and get into this secret place, within this strong tower? See verse 2: "*I will say of the* LORD, *He is my refuge and my fortress;*" as if he had said, I will not only say, that he is a refuge; but he is *my* refuge, I will say to the Lord; that is, I will set my faith on work in particular, to throw, devolve, and pitch myself upon him for my safety. And see what follows upon this setting faith thus on work, verses 3, 4: "*Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers,*" etc. So confident the Psalmist is that upon this course taken, safety shall follow.

Our safety lies not simply upon this, because God is a refuge, and is an habitation, but "Because *thou hast made* the Lord which is my refuge, thy habitation, there shall no evil befal thee," etc. It is therefore the *making* of God our habitation, upon which our safety lies; and this is the way to make God an habitation, thus to pitch and cast ourselves by faith upon his power and providence.—*Jeremiah Dyke.*

Verse 1.—We read of a stag that roamed about in the greatest security, by reason of its having a label on its neck, "*Touch me not, I belong to Cæsar*": thus the true servants of God are always safe, even among lions, bears, serpents, fire, water, thunder, and tempests; for all creatures know and reverence the shadow of God.—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 2.—"*My refuge, my fortress, my God.*" "*My refuge.*" God is our "*refuge.*" He who avails himself of a refuge is one who is forced to fly. It is a quiet retreat from a pursuing enemy. And there are trials, and temptations, and enemies, from which the Christian does best to fly. He cannot resist them. They are too strong for him. His wisdom is to fly into the refuge of the secret place of his God—to rest in the shadow of the Almighty. His "strength is to sit still" *there.* Isai. xxx. 7. "*My fortress.*" The Psalmist says, moreover, that God is his "*fortress.*" Here the idea is changed—no longer a peaceful, quiet hiding-place, but a tower of defence—strong, manifest, ready to meet the attacks of all enemies, ready and able to resist them all. God is a Friend who meets every want in our nature, who can supply every need. So when we are weak and fainting, and unable to meet the brunt of battle, and striving against sin and sorrow and the wrath of man He is our safe, quiet resting-place—our *fortress* also where no harm can reach us, no attack injure us. "*My God.*" Now the Psalmist, as a summing up of all his praises, says "I will say of Him, He is . . . . my God!" Is there any thing omitted in the former part of his declaration? *Everything* is here—all possible ascription of honour, and glory, and power to Him "*as God*"—"God over all, blessed for ever," and of love, reverence, trust, obedience, and filial relation towards him on the part of the Psalmist, as MY God . . . . when reflecting on the refuge and strength which the Lord has always been to him,

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and recalling his blessed experiences of sweet communion with God—words fail him. He can only say (but oh, with what expression!) MY GOD!—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verse 2.—"*My God.*" Specially art Thou my God, first, on thy part, because of the special goodness and favour which Thou dost bestow upon me. Secondly, on my part, because of the special love and reverence with which I cling to Thee.—*J. Paulus Palanterius.*

Verses 2—4.—If the severity and justice of God terrify, the Lord offereth himself as *a bird with stretched out wings* to receive the supplicant, ver. 4. If enemies who are too strong do pursue, the Lord openeth his bosom as a *refuge*, ver. 2. If the child be assaulted, he becometh a fortress, ver. 2. If he be hotly pursued and enquired after, the Lord becometh a *secret place* to hide his child; if persecution be hot, God giveth himself for a *shadow;* if potentates and mighty rulers turn enemies, the Lord interposeth as the *Most High and Almighty Saviour*, ver. 1. If his adversaries be crafty like fowlers or hunters, the Lord promiseth to prevent and break the snares, ver. 3. Whether evils do come upon the believer night or day, secretly or openly, to destroy him, the Lord preserveth his child from *destruction;* and if stumbling-blocks be laid in his child's way, he hath his instruments, his servants, his angels, prepared to keep the believer that he stumble not: "*He shall give his angels charge over thee*"; not one angel only, but all of them, or a number of them.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 3.—"*He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.*" Are we therefore beasts? Beasts doubtless. *When man was in honour he understood not, but was like the foolish beasts.* [Ps. xlix.] Men are certainly beasts, wandering sheep, having no shepherd. Why art thou proud, O man? Why dost thou boast thyself, O smatterer? See what a beast thou art, for whom the snares of the fowler are being prepared. But who are these *fowlers?* The fowlers indeed are the worst and wickedest, the cleverest and the cruelest. The fowlers are they who sound no horn, that they may not be heard, but shoot their arrows in secret places at the innocent. . . . . But lo! since we know the fowlers and the beasts, our further enquiry must be, what this *snare* may be. I wish not myself to invent it, nor to deliver to you what is subject to doubt. The Apostle shows us this snare, for he was not ignorant of the devices of these fowlers. Tell us, I pray, blessed Paul, what this snare of the devil is, from which the faithful soul rejoices that it is delivered? *They that will be rich* [in this world?] says he, *fall into temptation and the snare* [of the devil?] (1 Tim. 6). Are not the riches of this world, then, the snare of the devil? Alas! how few we find who can boast of freedom from this snare, how many who grieve that they seem to themselves too little enmshed in the net, and who still labour and toil with all their strength to involve and entangle themselves more and more. Ye who have left all and followed the Son of man who has not where to lay his head, rejoice and say, *He hath delivered me from the snare of the fowlers.—Bernard.*

Verse 3.—"*Surely he shall deliver thee from the noisome pestilence.*" Lord Craven lived in London when that sad calamity, the plague, raged. His house was in that part of the town called Craven Buildings. On the plague growing epidemic, his Lordship, to avoid the danger, resolved to go to his seat in the country. His coach and six were accordingly at the door, his baggage put up, and all things in readiness for the journey. As he was walking through his hall with his hat on, his cane under his arm, and putting on his gloves, in order to step into his carriage, he overheard his negro, who served him as postillion, saying to another servant, "I suppose, by my Lord's quitting London to avoid the plague, that his God lives in the country, and not in town." The poor negro said this in the simplicity of his heart, as really believing a plurality of gods. The speech, however, struck Lord Craven very sensibly, and made him pause. "My God," thought he, "lives everywhere, and

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can preserve me in town as well as in the country. I will even stay where I am. The ignorance of that negro has just now preached to me a very useful sermon. Lord, pardon this unbelief, and that distrust of thy providence, which made me think of running from thy hand." He immediately ordered his horses to be taken from the coach, and the baggage to be taken in. He continued in London, was remarkably useful among his sick neighbours, and never caught the infection.—*Whitecross's Anecdotes.*

Verses 3, 6.—"*Pestilence.*" It is from a word (דָּבַר) that signifies to speak, and speak out; the pestilence is a speaking thing, it proclaims the wrath of God amongst a people. Drusius fetches it from the same root, but in *piel*, which is to decree; showing that the pestilence is a thing decreed in heaven, not casual. Kirker thinks it is called דֶּבֶר, because it keeps order, and spares neither great nor small. The Hebrew root signifies to destroy, to cut off, and hence may the plague or pestilence have its name. The Septuagint renders it θάνατος, death, for ordinarily it is death; and it is expressed by "*Death,*" Rev. vi. 8, he sat on the pale horse, and killed with sword, hunger, death, and beasts of the earth; it refers to Ezek. xiv. 21, where the pestilence is mentioned. Pestilence may be from a word which signifies to spread, spoil, rush upon, for it doth so; 2 Sam. xxiv. 15, seventy thousand slain in three days; and plague, *a* πλήγη from πλησσω, to smite, to wound, for it smites suddenly, and wounds mortally; hence it is in Numb. xiv. 12, "I will smite them with the pestilence." This judgment is very grievous, it is called in verse 3 the "noisome pestilence," because it is infectious, contagious; and therefore the French read it, "*de la peste dangereuse,*" from the dangerous pestilence, it doth endanger those that come near it: and Musculus hath it, *a peste omnium pessima,* from the worst pestilence of all: and others, the woful pestilence; it brings a multitude of woes with it to any place or person it comes unto, it is a messenger of woful fears, sorrows, distractions, terrors, and death itself.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 4.—"*He shall cover thee with his feathers,*" etc. Christ's wings are both for healing and for hiding (Mat. iv. 2), for curing and securing us; the devil and his instruments would soon devour the servants of God, if he did not set an invincible guard about them, and cover them with the golden feathers of his protection.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 4.—"*He shall cover thee with his feathers,*" etc. This is the promise of the present life. For the promise of the life to come, who can explain? If the expectation of the just be gladness, and such gladness, that no object of desire in the world is worthy to be compared with it, what will the thing itself be which is expected? No eye, apart from Thee, O God, hath seen what Thou hast prepared for them that love Thee. Under these wings, therefore, four blessings are conferred upon us. For under these we are *concealed:* under these we are *protected* from the attack of the hawks and kites, which are the powers of the air: under these a salubrious shade *refreshes* us, and wards off the overpowering heat of the sun; under these also we are *nourished* and cherished.—*Bernard.*

Verse 4.—"*He shall cover thee with his feathers,*" etc.,

His plumes shall make a downie bed,
Where thou shalt rest; He shall display
His wings of truth over thy head,
Which, like a shield, shall drive away
The feares of night, the darts of day.

Thomas Cary.

Verse 4.—"*His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.*" That which we must oppose to all perils is the truth, or Word of God; so long as we keep that, and ward off darts and swords by that means, we shall not be overcome.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 5.—The true remedy against tormenting fear is faith in God; for many terrible things may befall men when they are most secure, like unto

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those which befall men in the night: but for any harm which may befall the believer this way, the Lord here willeth him to be nothing afraid: "*Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night.*" Many sadder accidents may befall men when they are most watching and upon their guard, but the Lord willeth the believer to be confident that he shall not be harmed this way: "*Thou shalt not be afraid for the arrow that flieth by day.*" Many evils are men subject unto, which come upon them men cannot tell how, but from such evils the Lord assureth the believer he shall have no harm: "*Thou shalt not be afraid of the pestilence which walketh in darkness.*" Men are subject to many evils which come upon them openly, and not unawares, such as are calamities from enemies and oppressors; the Lord willeth the believer to be confident that he shall not be harmed this way: "*Thou shalt not be afraid for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 5.—"*Thou shalt not be afraid.*" Not only do the pious stand safe, they are not even touched with fear. For the prophet does not say, Thou shalt not be seized; but, Thou shalt not be afraid. Certainly such a confidence of mind could not be attributed to natural powers, in so menacing and so overwhelming a destruction. For it is natural to mortals, it is implanted in them by God the author and maker of nature, to fear whatever is hurtful and deadly, especially what visibly smites and suddenly destroys. Therefore does he beautifully join together these two things: the first, in saying, *Thou shalt not be afraid;* the second, by adding, *For the terror.* He acknowledges that this plague is terrible to nature; and then by his trust in divine protection he promises himself this security, that he shall not fear the evil, which would otherwise make human nature quail. Wherefore, in my judgment, those persons are neither kind (*humani*) nor pious who are of opinion that so great a calamity is not to be dreaded by mortals. They neither observe the condition of our nature, nor honour the blessing of divine protection; both of which we see here done by the prophet.—*Musculus.*

Verse 5.—Not that we are always actually delivered out of every particular danger or grievance, but because all will turn (such is our confidence in God) to our greater good; and the more we suffer the greater shall our reward and our glory be. To the same purpose is the expression of Isaiah: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Isai. xliii. 2. So also Habakkuk iii. 17, 18, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom," &c.; and Job v. 19, 20, etc. And therefore here is no ground, if the words be rightly understood, for any man absolutely to presume or conclude that he shall actually be delivered out of any particular danger; much less upon such a presumption wilfully to run into dangers. If such figures, the ornament of all language; such rhetorical, emphatical amplifications be allowed to human writers, and well enough understood in ordinary language; why not to holy writers as well, who had to do with men, as well as others; whose end also was to use such expressions as might affect and move? That human writers have said as much of the security of good and godly men, I shall need to go no further than Horace his Ode, *Integer vitæ scelerisque purus*, &c. Most dangerous then and erroneous is the inference of some men, yea, of some expositors, here, upon these words of the psalmist, that no godly man can suffer by the plague, or pestilence: nor is old Lactantius his assertion much sounder, *Non potest ergo fieri, quin hominem justum inter descrimina tempestatum*, &c., that no just man can perish by war, or by tempest. (Instit. l. v., c. 18). Most interpreters conclude here, that the godly are preserved in time of public calamities; which, in a right sense, may be true; but withal they should have added, that all godly men are not exempted at such times; to prevent rash judgments.—*Westminster Assembly's Annotations.*

Verse 5.—"*The arrow.*" The arrow in this passage probably means the pestilence. The Arabs denote the pestilence by an allusion to this flying weapon. "I

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desired to remove to a less contagious air. I received from Solyman, the emperor, this message; that the emperor wondered what I meant, in desiring to remove my habitation: *is not the pestilence God's arrow, which will always hit his mark?* If God would visit me herewith, how could I avoid it? is not the plague, said he, in my own palace, and yet I do not think of removing."—*Busbequiu's Travels.* "What, say they, is not the plague the dart of Almighty God, and can we escape the blow that he levels at us? is not his hand steady to hit the persons he aims at? can we run out of his sight, and beyond his power?"—*Smith's Remarks on the Turks*, 1673. *Herbert* also, speaking of Curroon, says, "That year his empire was so wounded with God's arrows of plague, pestilence, and famine, as this thousand years before was never so terrible." See Exekiel v. 16.—*S. Burder's Scripture Expositor.*

Verses 5, 6.—Joseph Scaliger explains, in Epis. 9, these two verses thus, *thou shalt not fear*, מִפַּחַד, *from consternation by night*, מֵחֵץ, *from the arrow flying by day*, מִדֶּבֶר, *from pestilence walking at evening*, מִקֶּטֶב, *from devastation at noon.* Under these four he comprehends all the evils and dangers to which man is liable. And as the Hebrews divide the four-and-twenty hours of day and night into four parts, namely, evening, midnight, morning, and mid-day, so he understands the hours of danger to be divided accordingly: in a word, "that the man who has made God his refuge," is always safe, day and night, at every hour, from every danger.—*Bythner.*

Verse 6.—"*The pestilence that walketh in darkness; the destruction that wasteth at noonday.*" The description is equally forcible and correct. The diseases of all hot climates, and especially where vegetation is highly luxuriant, and marshes and miry swamps are abundant, as in the wilderness here referred to, proceed from the accumulating vapours of the *night*, or from the violence of the sun's rays at *mid-day.* The Beriberi of Ceylon, the spasmodic cholera and jungle-fever of India, and the greater part of the fevers of intertropical climates, especially that called the yellow fever, chiefly originate from the first of these—"the *pestilence* that stalketh in darkness"; while sun-strokes or coups de soleil, apoplexies, inflammations of the brain, and liver-complaints of most kinds, proceed from the second, "the *destruction* that wasteth at noonday." And it is in allusion to this double source of mischief that the psalmist exclaims most beautifully on another occasion, cxxi. 6: "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." And hence the Israelites were miraculously defended against both during their passage through the wilderness by the pillar of a cloud in the day-time, to ward off the solar rays; and by the pillar of fire by night, to dissipate the collecting vapours, and preserve the atmosphere clear, dry, and healthy.—*J. M. Good.*

Verse 6.—The putrid plague-fever often comes on in the night while the patient is asleep; the solstitial disease seizes in heat of harvest upon a man in open air, and cuts him off, perhaps ere evening. It is safety from perils like these that is spoken of. All these blessings are derived from and rest on (verse 1) the position of Him that claims them "*under the covert of the Most High.*"—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 6.—"*The pestilence that walketh in darkness.*" It walketh not so much in natural darkness, or in the darkness of the night, as in a figurative darkness, no man knowing where it walks, or whither it will walk, in the clearest light, whether to the poor man's house, or to the rich man's house, whether to the dwelling of the plebeian, or of the prince, till it hath left its own mark, and given a deadly stroke.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 7.—"*Ten thousand.*" The word *myriad* would better represent the exact idea in the original, as the Hebrew word is different from that which is translated "a thousand." It is here put for any large number.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 7.—"*It shall not come nigh thee.*" Not nigh thee? What? when they die on this side and on that, on every hand of a man, doth it not

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come nigh him? Yes, nigh him, but not so nigh as to hurt him: *the power of God can bring us near to danger, and yet keep us far from harm.* As good may be locally near us, and yet virtually far from us, so may evil. The multitude thronged Christ in the Gospel, and yet but one touched him so as to receive good; so Christ can keep us in a throng of dangers, that not one shall touch us to our hurt.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 7.—"*It shall not come nigh thee.*" Not with a view of showing that all good men may hope to escape from the pestilence, but as proofs that some who have had superior faith have done so, I have collected the following instances from various sources.—*C. H. S.*

Before his departure from Isna [Isny], the town was greatly afflicted with the pestilence; and he understanding that many of the wealthiest of the inhabitants intended to forsake the place, without having any respect or care of such as laboured with that disease, and that the houses of such as were infected, were commanded to be shut up by the magistrate, he openly admonished them, either to continue in the town, or liberally to bestow their alms before their departure, for the relief of such as were sick. And during the time of the visitation, he himself in person would visit those that were sick: he would administer spiritual comfort unto them, pray for them, and would be present with them day and night; and yet by the providence of God he remained untouched, and was preserved by the all-powerful hand of God.—*From the Life of Paulus Fagius, in T. Fuller's Abel Redevivus.*

In 1576, Cardinal Carlo Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, the worthiest of all the successors of St. Ambrose, when he learnt at Lodi, that the plague had made its appearance in his city, went at once to the city. His council of clergy advised him to remain in some healthy part of his diocese till the sickness should have spent itself, but he replied that a bishop, whose duty it is to give his life for his sheep, could not rightly abandon them in time of peril. They owned that to stand by them was the higher course. "Well," he said, "is it not a bishop's duty to choose the higher course?" So back into the town of deadly sickness he went, leading the people to repent, and watching over them in their suffering, visiting the hospitals, and, by his own example, encouraging his clergy in carrying spiritual consolation to the dying. All the time the plague lasted, which was four months, his exertions were fearless and unwearied, and what was remarkable was, that of his whole household only two died, and they were persons who had not been called to go about among the sick.—*From "A Book of Golden Deeds,"* 1864.

Although Defoe's history of the plague is a work of fiction, yet its statements are generally facts, and therefore we extract the following:—"The misery of the poor I had many occasions to be an eye-witness of, and sometimes also of the charitable assistance that some pious people daily gave to such, sending them relief and supplies both of food, physic, and other help, as they found they wanted. . . . . Some pious ladies were transported with zeal in so good a work, and so confident in the protection of Providence in discharge of the great duty of charity, that they went about in person distributing alms to the poor, and even visiting poor families, though sick and infected, in their very houses, appointing nurses to attend those that wanted attending, and ordering apothecaries and surgeons. . . . . giving their blessing to the poor in substantial relief to them, as well as hearty prayers for them. I will not undertake to say, as some do, that none of those charitable people were suffered to fall under the calamity itself; but this I may say, that I never knew anyone of them that came to any ill, which I mention for the encouragement of others in case of the like distress, and, doubtless, if they that give to the poor lend to the Lord, and he will repay them, those that hazard their lives to give to the poor, and to comfort and assist the poor in such misery as this, may hope to be protected in the work."—*Daniel Defoe's Journal of the Plague in London.*

Horne, in his notes on the Psalms, refers to the plague in Marseilles and the devotion of its bishop. There is a full account of him in the *Percy Anecdotes*

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from which we cull the following :—"M. de Belsunce, Bishop of Marseilles, so distinguished himself for his humanity during the plague which raged in that city in 1720, that the Regent of France offered him the richer and more honourable See of Laon, in Picardy; but he refused it, saying, he should be unwilling to leave a flock that had been endeared to him by their sufferings. His pious and intrepid labours are commemorated in a picture in the Town Hall of Marseilles, in which he is represented in his episcopal habit, attended by his almoners, giving his benediction to the dying. . . . But perhaps the most touching picture extant of the bishop's humane labours, is to be found in a letter of his own, written to the Bishop of Soissons, Sept. 27, 1720. 'Never,' he says, 'was desolation greater, nor was ever anything like this. Here have been many cruel plagues, but none was ever more cruel: to be sick and dead was almost the same thing. What a melancholy spectacle have we on all sides! we go into the streets full of dead bodies, half rotten through, which we pass to come to a dying body, to excite him to an act of contrition, and to give him absolution.'" Notwithstanding exposure to a pestilence so fatal, the devoted bishop escaped uninjured.

While France justly boasts of "Marseilles' good Bishop," England may congratulate herself on having cherished in her bosom a clergyman who in an equally earnest manner discharged his pastoral care, and watched over the simple flock committed to his charge, at no less risk of life, and with no less fervour of piety and benevolence. The Rev. W. Mompesson was rector of Eyam in Derbyshire, in the time of the plague that nearly depopulated the town in the year 1666. During the whole time of the calamity, he performed the functions of the physician, the legislator, and the minister of his afflicted parish; assisting the sick with his medicines, his advice, and his prayers. Tradition still shows a cavern near Eyam, where this worthy pastor used to preach to such of his parishioners as had not caught the distemper. Although the village was almost depopulated, his exertions prevented the spread of the plague to other districts, and he himself survived unharmed.

Verse 8.—"*Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.*" First, indeed, because of thy own escape; secondly, on account of thy complete security; thirdly, for the sake of comparison; fourthly, because of the perfect pre-eminence of justice itself. For then it will not be the time of mercy, but of judgment; nor shall any mercy in any way be ever shown towards the wicked there, where no improvement can be hoped for. Far away will be that softness of human infirmity, which meanwhile charity nevertheless uses for salvation, collecting in the ample folds of her outspread net good and bad fishes, that is, pleasant and hurtful affections. But this is done at sea. On the shore she chooses only the good, and so rejoicing with them that do rejoice, it hence comes to pass that she weeps not with those that weep.—*Bernard.*

Verse 9.—Here commences the second half of the Psalm. And it is as though the Psalmist feared lest (as is too often the case with us) we should, in dwelling on the promises and blessings of God, and applying them to ourselves, forget the condition to which they are annexed—the character of those who are to receive them. He therefore pauses here to remind us of the opening verses of the Psalm, by repeating again their substance.—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verse 9.—"*Because thou hast made the Lord,*" etc. What faith is this, what trust is that which God hath promised protection and deliverance to in the time of a plague? What act of faith is it? What faith is it? I answer *first*, there is a faith of persuasion, called faith, whereby men are persuaded and verily believe that they shall not die, nor fall by the hand of the plague. This is well; but I do not find in the 91st Psalm that this protection is entailed upon this persuasion, neither do I find this faith here mentioned.

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There is also a faith of reliance, whereby a man doth rely upon God for salvation; this is a justifying faith, true justifying faith; this is true faith indeed; but I do not find in this Psalm, that this promise of protection and deliverance in the time of a plague is entailed upon this, nor that this is here mentioned.

But again, there is a faith, I may call it a faith of recourse unto God, whereby a man doth betake himself unto God for shelter, for protection as to his habitation; when other men do run one this way, another that way, to their hiding places: in the time of a plague for a man then to betake himself to God, as to his habitation, I think this is the faith here spoken of in this 91st Psalm: for do but mark the words of the Psalm: at the 1st verse, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High," in the hiding place of the Most High: as if he should say, "When others run from the plague and pestilence and run to their hiding places," "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High," that betakes himself to God as his hiding place and his habitation, he shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty, shall be protected; and so at the 9th verse, "Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the Most High thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling;" as if he should say to us, In time of a plague men are running and looking out for habitations and hiding places; but because thou hast made the Lord thy habitation. and hast recourse to him as thy habitation, "no evil shall befall thee, neither shall the plague come nigh thy dwelling:" and again at the 11th verse it is said, "He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways," the ways of thy calling; as if he should say, In the time of a plague men will be very apt to leave station and calling, and so run away from the plague and pestilence; but saith he, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways," the ways of thy calling and place; that is, look when a man in the time of a plague shall conscientiously keep his station and place, and betake himself to God as his habitation; this is the faith that is here spoken of, and this is the faith that God hath promised protection to, here in the 91st Psalm. . . . . This promise of protection and deliverance is not made to a believer as a believer, but as acting and exercising faith; for though a man be a believer, if he do not act and exercise his faith, this promise will not reach him, therefore if a believer die, not exercising faith and trusting in God, it is no disparagement to the promise.—*William Bridge.*

Verse 9.—No man can have two *homes*—two places of *constant* resort. And if the Lord be truly "*our habitation*," we can have no other refuge for our souls, no other resting place for our hearts.—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verses 9, 10.—There is a threefold preservation which the church and the members of it may look for from divine providence. One from, another in, and a third by, dangers. *First*, from dangers, according to the promise in one of the Psalms, "Because thou hast made the Lord who is my refuge, even the Most High thy habitation: there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." Austin had appointed to go to a certain town to visit the Christians there, and to give them a sermon or more. The day and place were known to his enemies, who set armed men to lie in wait for him by the way which he was to pass, and kill him. As God would have it, the guide whom the people had sent with him to prevent his going out of the right way mistook, and led him into a by-path, yet brought him at last to his journey's end. Which when the people understood, as also the adversaries' disappointment, they adored the providence of God, and gave him thanks for that great deliverance.*

II. In dangers. So in Job v. 19, 20. "He shall deliver thee in six troubles, yea in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee

* Agnoscunt omnes miram Dei providentiam, cui ut liberatori gratias merito egerunt. Possidonius in vita August, chap. xii.

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from death: and in war from the power of the sword." In time of famine the widow of Sarepta's store was made to hold out. The providence of God was with Daniel in the lions' den, shutting up the mouths of those furious beasts: and with the men in the fiery furnace, giving a prohibition to the fire that it should not burn, when they were in the jaws of danger, yea of death. The church hath always been a lily among thorns, yet flourishes still. This bush is yet far from a consumption, although it has seldom or never been out of the fire.

III. By danger. There is a preservation from greater evils by less. No poison but Providence knoweth how to make an antidote; so Jonah was swallowed by a whale, and by that danger kept alive. Joseph thrown into a pit, and afterwards sold into Egypt, and by these hazards brought to be a nursing father to the church. Chrysostom excellently, Fides in periculis secura est, in securitate periclitatur.* Faith is endangered by security, but secure in the midst of danger, as Esther's was when she said, "If I perish I perish." God preserveth us, not as we do fruits that are to last but for a year, in sugar; but as flesh for a long voyage in salt: we must expect in this life much brine and pickle, because our heavenly Father preserveth us as those whom he resolveth to keep for ever, in and by dangers themselves. Paul's thorn in the flesh, which had much of danger and trouble in it, was given him on purpose to prevent pride, which was a great evil. "Lest I," said he, "should be exalted above measure through abundance of revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." Elsewhere having commemorated Alexander the coppersmith's withstanding and doing him much evil, yea Nero's opening his mouth as a lion against him, and the Lord's delivering of him thence, he concludeth as more than a conqueror. "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen." 2 Tim. iv. 14, 15, 17, 18.—*John Arrowsmith*, (1602—1659).

Verses 9—14.—Dependence on Christ is not the cause of his hiding us, but it is the qualification of the person that shall be hid.—*Ralph Robinson.*

Verse 10.—"*There shall no evil befall thee,*" etc. It is a security in the very midst of evils. Not like the security of angels—safety in a world of safety, quiet in a calm; but it is quiet in a storm, safety amid desolation and the elements of destruction, deliverance where everything else is going to wreck. —*Charles Bradley*, 1840.

Verse 10.—God doth not say no afflictions shall befall us, but no *evil.*—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 10.—Sin which has kindled a fire in hell, is kindling fires on earth continually. And when they break out, every one is asking how they happened. Amos replies, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" And when desolation is made by fire, Isaiah declares, The Lord hath "consumed us, because of our iniquities." Many years ago my house was oft threatened to be destroyed, but the Lord insured it, by giving me the 10th verse of the 91st Psalm; and the Lord's providence is the best insurance.—*John Berridge.*

Verse 11.—"*He shall give his angels charge,*" etc. Charge; charge is a strict command, more than a bare command; as when you would have a servant do a business certainly and fully, you lay a charge upon him, I charge you that you do not neglect that business; you do not barely tell what he should do, prescribe him his work, but you charge him to do it. So says the Lord unto the angels: My servants or children, now they are in the plague and pestilence, O my angels, I charge you stir not from their houses, I

* Homil xxvi. operis imperf. in Matt.

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charge you, stir not from such an one's bed-side; it is a charge, "He shall give his angels charge."

Further, he doth not only, and will not only charge his angel, but his angels; not one angel charged with the safety of his people, but many angels; for their better guard and security, "He shall give his angels charge." And again, "He will give his angels charge over *thee* to keep thee;" to keep *thee;* charge over *thee* and to keep thee; not only over the whole church of God, but over every particular member of the church of God; "He will give his angels charge over thee to keep thee;" this is his marvellous care. Well, but besides this, "He will give his angels charge to keep thee *in all thy ways,*" not in some of thy ways, but in all thy ways. As God's providence is particular in regard of our persons, so it is universal in regard of our ways. "He will give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee," not in some but "in all thy ways."

But is this all? No: "They shall bear thee up in their hands," as every servant desires and loves to take up the young heir, or the young master into his arms, so the angels. It is a great matter that the Lord promiseth to pitch his tents. "And the angels of the Lord shall pitch their tents round about them that fear him;" but here is more; the angels shall not only pitch their tents, be their guard, but their nurses, to bear them up in their hands; but why? "That thou dash not thy foot against a stone." When children begin to go, they are very apt to fall and get many a knock; to stumble at every little stone. Now there are many stones of stumbling that are in our way, and we are very apt to fall and miscarry; but such is the goodness of God, the providence of God, the goodness of his providence, that as he hath provided his angels to be our guard, in opposition to all our foreign enemies, so he hath provided his angels to be our nurses, in opposition to all our weaknesses and infirmities, that we get no hurt, that we miscarry not in the least.

But what need God make use of angels to protect his people, he is able to do it alone; and is it not for God's dishonour to make use of them for the protection of his people? No, it is for the honour of God, for the more honourable the servants are, the instruments are, that a king or prince doth use for the protecting of his people, the more honourable is that king or prince. Now, the angels, they are honourable creatures; frequently they are called gods; "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels." . . . . They are the fittest people in the world for this employment, fittest in regard of themselves, fittest in regard of the saints. They are fittest in regard of themselves, for *First,* they are an exceeding strong and potent people; who more fit to look to and care for the concernments of the saints and people of God, than those that are strong and potent? It is said of the angels in the ciii. Psalm, that they excel in strength, v. 20. . . . . One angel you know destroyed a hundred and fourscore thousand of the host of Assyria in a night; as one constable will scare away twenty thieves, so one good angel invested with God's authority is able to drive away a thousand evil angels, devils: they are an exceeding strong and potent people. *Second.* As they are an exceeding strong and potent people, so they are a very knowing and a wise people; and who so fit to manage the affairs and concerns of the saints and people of God, and to protect and defend them, as a knowing and understanding people? You know what Joab said to David; "Thou art for wisdom as an angel of God." Says our Saviour, "No man knoweth that day and time, no, not the angels in heaven;" as if the angels in heaven knew every secret and were acquainted with every hidden thing: they are an exceeding knowing people, very prudent and very wise. *Third.* As they are an exceeding knowing and wise people, so they are also exceeding active and expeditious, quick in despatches. Who more fit to protect and defend the saints and people of God, than those that are active, expedite, and quick in their despatches? such are the angels. In the first of Ezekiel ye read that every one had four wings; why? because of their great activity and expedition, and the quick despatch they make in all their affairs. *Fourth.* As they are an active and expeditious people, so they are a people very faithful

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both to God and man; in the ciii. Psalm they are ready to do God's will, and not only ready to fulfil God's will, but they do it: "Bless the Lord all ye his angels that excel in strength (v. 20), that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his that do his pleasure." They are very faithful; and who so fit to do the work, to attend and look to the concernments of the saints and people of God, as those that are faithful? *Fifth.* As they are an exceeding faithful people, so they are a people that are very loving to the saints and children of God, very loving; otherwise they were not fit to be their nurses: what is a nurse without love? They are loving to the saints. "Do it not," (said the angel unto John), "I am thy fellow-servant;" do not give divine worship to me, I am thy fellow-servant; fellow servants are loving to one another; they are fellow-servants with the saints. . . . . It is recorded of Alexander that being in great danger and to fight next day with his enemies, he slept very soundly the night before; and he being asked the reason thereof, said, Parmenio wakes; meaning a great and faithful captain of his; Parmenio wakes, says he. The angels are called watchmen, they watch and are faithful, therefore you may be secure, quiet, and at rest: trust in the Lord for ever, upon this account, in this day trust in the Lord.

If these things be so, then, friends, why should we not stoop to any work commanded, though it lie much beneath us? Do not you think that the attending upon a sick man, a man that hath a plague sore running upon him, is a work that lies much beneath angels? yet the angels do it because it is commanded, though much beneath them yet they stoop to it because it is commanded; and what though a work lie much beneath you, yet if it be commanded, why should you not stoop to it? You will say, Such an one is much beneath me, I will not lay my hand under his shoes, he is much beneath me; ah, but the angels lay their hands under your shoes, and the work they do for you is much beneath them: why should we not be like our attendants? This is angelical obedience; the angels do you many a kindness, and never look for thanks from you, they do many a kindness that you are not aware of: why are you delivered sometimes you know not how? here is a hand under a wing, the ministration of angels is the cause of it. But I say the work they stoop to for you is much beneath them, and therefore why should we not stoop to any work commanded, though it lie much beneath us?—*William Bridge.*

Verse 11.—"*He shall give his angels charge over thee,*" etc. When Satan tempted Christ in the wilderness, he alleged but one sentence of Scripture for himself, Matthew iv. 6, and that psalm out of which he borrowed it made so plain against him, that he was fain to pick here a word and there a word, and leave out that which went before, and skip in the midst, and omit that which came after, or else he had marred his cause. The Scripture is so holy, and pure, and true, that no word nor syllable thereof can make for the Devil, or for sinners, or for heretics: yet, as the devil alleged Scripture, though it made not for him, but against him, so do the libertines, and epicures, and heretics, as though they had learned at his school.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 11.—One angel armed with the power and glory of God is stronger than a whole country. Earthly princes are subject to many changes and great unsurety of life and estate. The reason is, their enemies may kill their watch, and corrupt their guard. But what men or kingdoms can touch the Church's watch? what angels of gold are able to corrupt the angles of God? and then how can that perish that is committed to keepers so mighty and faithful? Secondly, the charge of us is given to those ministering spirits by parcels, not in gross and piece-meal, not in a lump: our members in a book, our hairs by tale and number. For it is upon record, and, as it were, delivered to them in writing in one Psalm, *They keep all our bones*, Ps. xxxiv. 20; in this, *they keep our very foot*, putting it in security (ver. 12); and elsewhere our whole man and every member. And can a charge so precisely and so particularly given and taken, be neglected? Thirdly, their manner of keeping us, as it is

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set down in the text, cannot but promise great assurance; for, is not the little child safe while the nurse carrieth it in her arms, or beareth it in her hands? So while these nurses so bear us, can we be in danger? but our nurses on earth may fall; these nurses, the *angels*, cannot.—*Robert Horn.*

Verse 11.—"*His angels.*" Taking the word *angel* in its literal meaning, as *messenger*, we may look upon any agency which God employs to strengthen, protect, and help us, as *his angel* to us.—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verse 11.—"*To keep thee in all thy ways.*" How should those heavenly spirits bear that man in their arms, like nurses, upon earth living; or bear up his soul to heaven, like winged porters, when he dies, that refuseth the right way? They shall keep us in all our ways. Out of the way it is their charge to oppose us, as to preserve us in the way. Nor is this more a terror to the ungodly, than to the righteous a comfort. For if an angel would keep even a Balaam from sinning, how much more careful are all those glorious powers to prevent the miscarriages of God's children! From how many falls and bruises have they saved us! In how many inclinations to evil have they turned us, either by removing occasions, or by casting in secretly good motions! We sin too often, and should catch many more falls, if those holy guardians did not uphold us. Satan is ready to divert us, when we endeavour to do well; when to do ill, angels are as ready to prevent us. We are in Joshua the high-priest's case, with Satan on the one hand, on the other an angel, Zech. iii. 1: without this, our danger were greater than our defence, and we could neither stand nor rise.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 11.—"*To keep thee in all thy ways.*" Their commission, large as it is, reaches no further: when you leave that, you lose your guard; but while you keep your way, angels, yea, the God of angels, will keep you. Do not so much fear losing your estate or your liberty or your lives, as losing your way, and leaving your way: fear that more than any thing; nothing but sin exposeth you to misery. So long as you keep your way, you shall keep other things; or if you lose any of them, you shall get what is better: though you may be sufferers for Christ, you shall not be losers by him.—*Samuel Slater,* (—1704) *in* "*Morning Exercises.*"

Verse 11.—"*In all thy ways.*" Your ways are God's ways, your way is the way commanded by God. If you be out of God's ways, you are out of your own way: if you be in your way, the angels shall keep you, even in the time of a plague, and bear you up in their hands that you dash not your foot against a stone; but if you be out of your way, I will not insure your safety. When Balaam went upon the devil's errand an angel met him and scared his ass, and the ass ran his foot against the wall, dashed his foot against the wall. The promise is, "Thou shalt not dash thy foot against a stone;" but he was out of his way, and the angel met him and scared his ass, and his ass made him rush his leg against the wall. Jonah went out of his way when he ran away from God; God bade him go one way, and he went another. Well, what then? were the angels with him for his protection; the very sea would not be quiet till he was thrown overboard: instead of angels to protect him, he had a whale to devour him. I confess indeed, through the free grace and mercy of God, the belly of destruction was made a chamber of preservation to him, but he was out of his way; and instead of an angel to keep him that he dash not his foot, his whole body was thrown overboard. Says Solomon, "As a bird from her nest, so is a man out of his place:" so long as the bird is in her nest it is free from the hawk, it is free from the birding-piece, it is free from the nets and gins and snares as long as it is in its nest; but when the bird is off her nest then she is exposed to many dangers. So, so long as a man is in his way, in his place and in his way, he is well and under protection; but when a man is off his nest, out of his place and out of his way, then is he exposed to all dangers: but be but in your way and then you may assure yourselves of divine protection, and of the management thereof by the hands of angels. Oh who would not labour always to be in that way which God hath appointed him to be

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in? Why should we not always consider with ourselves and say, But am I in my way? Old Mr. Dod being upon the water and going out of one boat into another, slipped between them, and the first word he spake was this, "Am I in my way?" so we should always be saying, But am I in my way? am I in my way? I am now idling away my time, but am I in my way? Oh my soul, am I in my way? I am in my calling this day without prayer in the morning and reading the Scriptures; but am I in my way? Oh, my soul, am I in my way? I am now in such frothy company where I get no good, but hurt; but am I in my way? Ever consider this, Am I in my way? You may expect the Lord's protection and the angels' attendance, if you be in your way, but not else.—*William Bridge.*

Verse 11.—We have the safeguard of the empire; not only the protection of the King, from which the wicked as outlaws are secluded; but also the keeping of angels, to whom he hath given a charge over us, to keep us in all his ways. So nearly we participate of his Divine things, that we have his own guard royal to attend us.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 11.—"*He shall give his angels charge over thee,*" etc.

And is there care in heaven, and is there love
In heavenly spirits to these creatures base,
That may compassion of their evils move?
There is, else much more wretched were the race
Of men than beasts. But oh, the exceeding grace
Of highest God, that loves his creatures so,
And all his works with mercy doth embrace,
That blessed angels he sends to and fro,
To serve us wicked men, to serve his wicked foe!

How oft do they their silver bowers leave,
To come to succour us that succour want!
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The flitting skies, like flying pursuivant,
Against foul fiends to aid us militant!
They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant;
And all for love and nothing for reward.
Oh, why should heavenly God to man have such regard!

—*Edmund Spenser*, 1552—1599.

Verses 11, 12.—It is observable that Scripture is the weapon that Satan doth desire to wield against Christ. In his other ways of dealing he was shy, and did but lay them in Christ's way, offering only the occasion, and leaving him to take them up; but in this he is more confident, and industriously pleads it, as a thing which he could better stand to and more confidently avouch. The care of his subtlety herein, lay in the misrepresentation and abuse of it, as may be seen in these particulars: (1) In that he urged this promise to promote a sinful thing, contrary to the general end of all Scripture, which was therefore written 'that we sin not.' (2) But more especially in his clipping and mutilating of it. He industriously leaves out that part of it which doth limit and confine the promise of protection to lawful undertakings, such as this was not, and renders it as a general promise of absolute safety, be the action what it will. It is a citation from Ps. xci. 11, 12, which there runs thus, "*He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*" These last words, "*in all thy ways,*" which doth direct to a true understanding of God's intention in that promise, he deceitfully leaves out, as if they were needless and unnecessary parts of the promise, when indeed they were on purpose put there by the Spirit of God, to give a description of those persons and actions, unto whom, in such cases, the accomplishment of the promise might be expected; for albeit the word in the original, which is translated "*ways*"—דְּרָכִים—doth signify any kind of way or action in the general, yet in this place it doth not; for then God were engaged to an absolute protection of men, not only when they

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unnecessarily thrust themselves into dangers, but in the most abominably sinful actions whatsoever, which would have been a direct contradiction to those many scriptures wherein God threatens to withdraw his hand and leave sinners to the danger of their iniquities; but it is evident that the sense of it is no more than this, 'God is with you, while you are with him.' We have a paraphrase of this text, to this purpose, in Prov. iii. 23, "Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble;" where the condition of this safety, pointed to in the word "then," which leads the promise, is expressly mentioned in the foregoing verses, "My son, let them"—that is, the precepts of wisdom—"not depart from thine eyes . . . . Then"—not upon other terms—"shalt thou walk in thy way safely." The "*ways*" then in this promise cited by Satan, are the ways of duty, or the ways of our lawful callings. The fallacy of Satan in this dealing with Scripture is obvious, and Christ might have given this answer, as Bernard hath it, That God promiseth to keep him in his ways, but not in self-created dangers, for that was not his way, but his ruin; or if a way, it was Satan's way, but not his. (3) To these two, some add another abuse, in a subtle concealment of the following verse in Ps. xci.: "*Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder.*" This concerned Satan, whose cruelty and poisonous deceits were fitly represented by the lion and the adder, and there the promise is also explained to have a respect to Satan's temptations—that is—God would so manage his protection, that his children should not be led into a snare.—*Richard Gilpin.*

Verses 11, 12.—There is, to my mind, a very remarkable coincidence of expression between the verses of this Psalm, about the office of God's angels, and that passage in Isaiah where Christ's sympathy and presence receive the same charge attributed to them without interposition. In Isaiah lxiii. 9, we read, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them." And again, "They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone," compared with, "And he bare them, and he carried them all the days of old." Christ in us, by sympathy with our nature—Christ in us, by the indwelling of his Spirit in each individual heart—thus he knows all our needs. Christ with us, in every step, all-powerful to make all work for good, and with love and pity watching over our interests—thus his presence saves us, and *all* things are made his messengers to us.—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verse 12.—"*Angels . . . . shall bear thee up . . . . lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*" Angels are introduced as bearing up the believer in their hands, not that he may be carried in safety over some vast ocean, not that he may be transported through hostile and menacing squadrons, not that, when exposed to some extraordinary danger, he may be conveyed to a place of refuge, but, as bearing him up in their arms, "*lest at any time he hurt his foot against a stone.*" . . . . Angels, the topmost beings in creation, the radiant, the magnificent, the powerful—angels are represented as holding up a righteous man, lest some pebble in the path should make him trip, lest he hurt his foot against a stone.

Is there, after all, any want of keeping between the agency and the act, so that there is even the appearance of angels being unworthily employed, employed on what is beneath them, when engaged in bearing us up, lest at any time we hurt the foot against a stone? Nay, the hurting the foot against a stone has often laid the foundations of fatal bodily disease: the injury which seemed too trifling to be worth notice has produced extreme sickness, and ended in death. Is it different in spiritual respects, in regard of the soul, to which the promise in our text must be specially applied? Not a jot. Or, if there be a difference, it is only that the peril to the soul from a slight injury is far greater than that to the body: the worst spiritual diseases might commonly be traced to inconsiderable beginnings. . . . . .

It can be no easy thing, this keeping the foot from being hurt against a

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stone, seeing that the highest of created beings are commissioned to effect it. Neither is it. The difficulty in religion is the taking up the cross "daily," rather than the taking it up on some set occasion, and under extraordinary circumstances. The serving God in little things, the carrying religious principles into the details of life, the discipline of our tempers, the regulation of our speech, the domestic Christianity, the momentary sacrifices, the secret and unobserved self-denials; who that knows anything of the difficulties of piety, does not know that there is greater danger of his failing in these than in trials of apparently far higher cost, and harder endurance; if on no other account, yet because the very absence of what looks important, or arduous, is likely to throw him off his guard, make him careless or confident, and thereby almost insure defect or defeat?—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 12.—To carry them in their hands is a metaphor, and signifies a perfect execution of their custody, to have a special care of them, and therefore is rather expressed so, than carrying them on their shoulders. That which one carries on their hand they are sure to keep. The Spaniards have a proverb when they would signify eminent favour and friendship, 'they carry him upon the palms of their hands,' that is, they exceedingly love him, and diligently keep him. "*Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*" He persists in the metaphor: children often stumble and fall, unless they be led and carried in hands and arms. By *stones* are meant all difficulties, objections, perils, both to the outward and inward man, as Christ is said to take care of hairs and sparrows, that is, of every thing even to a hair. Now we know what this charge is, saving that Zanchy adds also the metaphor of schoolmasters, and says that we are poor rustic people, strangers; but being adopted into the household of God, he gives his most noble ministers, *the angels*, charge, first of our nursing, and then of our education; when we are weaned, to instruct us, to admonish, to institute, to correct us, to comfort us, to defend us, to preserve us from all evil, and to provoke us to all good. And these angels, seeing we are so dear to God, that for our sakes he spared not his own Son, take this charge with all their hearts upon them, and omit nothing of their duty from our birth to the end of our life.—*Henry Lawrence, in "A Treatise of our Communion and Warre with Angells,"* 1646.

Verse 13.—"*Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.*" What avails a human foot among these? What force of human affection can stand fast among such terrible monsters? These are spiritual wickednesses, and are designated by not incongruous titles. . . . . One is an *asp*, another a basilisk, a third a *lion*, and a fourth a *dragon*, because each in his own invisible way variously wounds,—one by his bite, another by his look, a third by his roar or blow, and a fourth by his breath. . . . . .

Consider this also, whether perchance we are able to meet these four temptations with four virtues. The lion roars, who will not fear? If any there be, he shall be *brave*. But when the lion is foiled, the dragon lurks in the sand, in order to excite the soul with his poisonous breath; breathing therein the lust of earthly things. Who, think you, shall escape his wiles? None but the *prudent*. But perhaps whilst you are careful in attacking these, some annoyance vexes you; and lo! the asp is upon you forthwith. For he seems to have found for himself a seasonable moment. Who is he that shall not be exasperated by this asp? Certainly the man of *temperance* and modesty, who knows how to abound, and to suffer want. On this opportunity, I think, the Evil Eye with its wicked allurements may determine to fascinate thee. Who shall turn away his face? Truly the *just* man, who not only desires not to take to himself the glory due to God, but not even to receive what is presented by another: if yet he is a just man, that justly executes what is just, who performs not his righteousness before men, who, lastly, although he is just, lifts not up his head. For this virtue consists specially in

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humility. This purifies the intention, this also obtains merit all the more truly and effectually, because it arrogates less to itself.—*Bernard.*

Verse 13.—"*Adder.*" The *pethen* is classed with the lion as being equally to be dreaded by the traveller. . . . There is no doubt that the Egyptian cobra is the *pethen* of Scripture.—*J. G. Wood.*

Verse 13.—"*Dragon.*" The expression is used (1) for "sea-monsters," (2) for serpents, (3) for wild beasts or birds characteristic of desolate places, and (4) it is used figuratively to represent the enemies of the Lord, and especially Pharaoh, as head and representative of the Egyptian power, and Nebuchadrezzar, the head and representative of the Chaldean monarchy. The term is thus a general one, signifying any monstrous creature, whether of the land or of the water, and is to be set down with the one or the other, according as the context indicates.—*John Duns, in "Biblical Natural Science."*

Verse 13.—"*Thou shalt tread upon;*" "*thou shalt trample under feet.*" Thou shalt tread upon them, not accidentally, as a man treads upon an adder or a serpent in the way; but his meaning is, thou shalt intentionally tread upon them like a conqueror, thou shalt tread upon them to testify the dominion over them, so when the Lord Jesus gave that promise (Luke x. 19) to his disciples, that they should do great things, he saith, *You shall tread upon serpents;* that is, you shall have power to overcome whatsoever may annoy you: serpentine power is all hurtful power, whether literal or mystical. As the Apostle assures all believers (Rom. xvi. 20), "*God shall tread down Satan* (that old serpent) *under your feet shortly.*"—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 13 (*second clause*).—But what is said unto Christ? "*And thou shalt tread on the lion and dragon.*" *Lion*, for overt wrath; *dragon* for covert lurking.—*Augustine.*

Verse 14.—"*Because he hath set his love upon me.*" Vulg. "*Because he hath hoped in me.*" Whatever is to be done, whatever is to be declined, whatever is to be endured, whatever is to be chosen, Thou O Lord art my hope. This is the only cause of all my promises, this the sole reason of my expectation. Let another pretend to merit, let him boast that he bears the burden and heat of the day, let him say that he fasts twice on the Sabbath, let him finally glory that he is not as other men; for me it is good to cleave unto God, to place my hope in the Lord God. Let others hope in other things, one in his knowledge of letters, another in his worldly wisdom, one in his nobility, one in his dignity, another in some other vanity, for thy sake I have made all things loss, and count them but dung; since Thou, Lord, art my hope.—*Bernard*, quoted by *Le Blanc.*

Verse 14 (*first clause*).—As there is a *because* and a *therefore* in the process of the law, in concluding death for sin, so there is a *because* and a *therefore* in the process of grace, and of the *gospel*, which doth reason from one grace given to infer another grace to be given, even grace for grace; and such is this here: "*Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him.*" —*David Dickson.*

Verse 14.—He does not say, Because he is without sin, because he has perfectly kept all my precepts, because he has merit and is worthy to be delivered and guarded. But he produces those qualities which are even found in the weak, the imperfect, and those still exposed to sin in the flesh, namely, adhesion, knowledge of his name, and prayer.—*Musculus.*

Verse 14.—"*He hath set his love upon me.*" In the love of a divinely illuminated believer there is (1) the sweet property of *gratitude.* The soul has just and enlarged views of the salvation which he has obtained through the name of Jesus. The evils from which he is saved; the blessings in hand, and the blessings in hope; the salvation in time, and the salvation through eternity, which can and shall be enjoyed through the name of Jesus, excites feelings of the most ardent gratitude in the soul of the Christian. (2) Another delightful ingredient in this settled love is, *admiration.* Everything in the scheme and

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execution of God's redeeming plan is an object of admiration. All that the Lord Jesus is in himself; all that he has done; all that he does at the present; and all that he has promised to do for his people, deserves the warmest admiration. This holy feeling is eperienced in the breast of the man to whom the Lord can say, "*He hath set his love upon me.*" (3) Another ingredient in the illuminated love of the believer is *delightful complacency.* Nothing can afford complacent delight in any excellency unless we are persuaded that we either do possess, or may possess it. I may go to the palace of the greatest monarch in the world, and be deeply struck with astonishment and admiration at the wonder beheld, but there will not be one thrill of complacency felt in my bosom at the view of the astonishing objects which crowd upon my vision. Why? Because I neither have, nor can have any interest in them; they are not mine, nor ever can be; therefore, I cannot take complacent delight in them. But the love of the Christian is a delightful love, (as Mr. Baxter called it,) because there is in the Lord everything that is worthy of infinite and eternal admiration; and then there is the thought which produces a thrill of pleasure,—whatever I admire I can, in some measure, possess. The illuminated eye of God's favourite sees everything in the Lord to supply his necessities; everything to satisfy his desires, all his own; which makes the soul delight itself in the Lord, and he rests in his love. Therefore, the Lord says of the object of his loving-kindness, "He hath set his love upon me"—he hath renounced sin as the greatest abomination; he hath taken off the heart from all idolatrous attachment to the creature, and placed it fixedly and supremely upon God.—*William Dawson, Methodist Preacher* (1773—1841).

Verse 14.—"*He hath set his love upon me.*" We have a similar expression in daily use, which means the bending of all our energies to one end—a ceaseless effort after one object. We say, "I have set my heart on such a thing." This is what God will have from us—an intense, single-hearted love. We must love him "with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind," so that, like Jesus, we may "delight to do his will." Just let us think of the way in which setting our heart on anything affects us, head, hands, time, thought, action—all are at work for its attainment. How we sacrifice everything else to it? Comfort, ease, present advantage, money, health, nay, our very selves, go freely for the sake of our cherished wish.

Have I *so* "set my heart upon" God? Temperaments differ. This may be an overdrawn picture of the way in which some of us seek a cherished object. But each knows his own capability in this way. God also knows our frame, and requires his best at every man's hand.

There is one thing in this verse which may encourage us very much. It is not because of *perfect* love that God will deliver. It is to the will to love and serve—it is to the *setting* the heart, that the promise is made—to the "full purpose of heart" that is *set* to cleave unto the Lord.—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verse 14.—"*I will set him on high.*" That is, in an inaccessible, or lofty place, I will set him, which means, I will deliver him. When men truly know God to be a deliverer, they both put confidence in Him, and call upon Him. Then God exalts and delivers him that calls.—*Franciscus Vatablus.*

Verse 14.—"*I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.*" There is a great deal of safety in the knowledge of God, in his attributes, and in his Christ. A man's safety we see lies in his running to the tower (Prov. xxiii. 10); he runs and is safe. And it is the knowledge of this tower that sets a man a running to it. Hence we find safety attributed to the knowledge of the Lord. "*I will set him on high,*" I will exalt him, and so he shall be safe. Why so? "*Because he hath known my name*"; for the knowing of God aright was that which made him run, and so he is exalted and set on high. Then a man is safe when he hath got this tower to be his tower, when he hath gotten God to be his God. Now when we know God, we get him to be our God, and make this tower our tower, Jer. xxiv. 7: "I will give them an heart to know me,

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and I will be their God."—*Jeremiah Dyke, in "The Righteous Man's Tower,"* 1639.

Verses 14—16.—"*He hath known my name.*" From this text I would introduce to your notice the most desirable character under the sun; and I would exhibit him before you to excite each one to seek, until you obtain the same blessedness. The character that I shall exhibit is GOD'S FAVOURITE, one who is an object of the "lovingkindness of the Lord"; and in reading this passage there are two things which strike our attention concerning such a character. *First*, what the Lord says *of* him. *Second*, what the Lord says *to* him.

Now, then, my brethren—LOOK! There stands before you GOD'S FAVOURITE!

I. Listen to *what God says* OF *him.* 1. He says of him, "*He knows my name.*" The first principle of the life of God in the fallen soul of man is knowledge; spiritual, divine knowledge. The first operation of the Holy Ghost in the work of salvation, is a conviction of the character and perfections and relations of God. The Lord says, "he knows my name." He knows my name as Omniscient, Omnipresent, Holy, Just and True. (1) He first knows my name as a sin-hating, sin-avenging God; and this knowledge was a means of leading him to a deep sense of his own personal corruption, guilt, and danger as a sinner. (2) But the favourite of the Lord knows his name as revealed to Moses, as "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." He knows the name of the Lord as concentrated in the name of Jesus, who "shall save his people from their sins." By the *white* beams of God's holiness, (if I may so speak) the sinner sees his corruption, guilt and deformity: by the *red* beams of God's justice he sees his unspeakable danger: by the *mild* beams of God's mercy, he discovers a ground of hope—that there is pardon for his aggravated crimes. But it is in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ, that God appears most delightful. Hence we can say to every saved soul, as Paul did to the Corinthians:—"God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." As all the colours of the rainbow meet in one sunbeam, so all the perfections of God as perfectly unite, and more beautifully shine forth, in the person and offices of Jesus Christ, upon the soul of the penitent believer. This saving knowledge is always vital, active, and powerful.—*William Dawson.*

Verse 14.—"*He hath known my name.*" May we not get some light on this expression from the custom of the Jews, keeping the name JEHOVAH sacred to their own use, regarding it as too holy even to be pronounced by them in common use, and thus preserving it from being taken in vain by the heathen around? Thus it was known to Jews only. . . . . But whatever be the origin of the expressions, to "know *His name*," to "trust in *His name*," to "believe in *His name*," it evidently in all these cases means whatever is revealed concerning Him—all that by which he maketh himself known. His Word, his Providence, above all, his Son, are included thus in his *name*, which we must know, believe in, and trust. So that to "know his name" is to know himself, as revealed in the Gospel.—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

Verse 14 (*last clause*).—Sound love to God. floweth from and is joined with sound knowledge of God, as his Majesty is declared unto us in Scripture: the believer who hath set his *love* upon God, "*hath known my name*," saith he.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 15.—"*I will answer him.*" I think we sometimes discourage ourselves by a misconception of the exact meaning of the expression, "*answer*," taking it to mean only *grant*. Now, an answer is not necessarily an acquiescence. It may be a refusal, an explanation, a promise, a conditional grant. It is, in fact, simply *attention to our request expressed.* In this sense, before we call he will answer, and while we are yet speaking he will hear, Isaiah lxv. 24. —*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

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Verse 15.—"*I will be with him in trouble.*" *I will be with him in trouble*, says God: and shall I seek meanwhile anything else than trouble? It is good for me to cleave unto God. Not only so, but also to put my hope in the Lord: because *I will deliver him*, he says, *and honour him. I will be with him in trouble. My delights*, he says, *are with the sons of men.* Emanuel God with us. *Hail*, thou art *highly favoured*, says the Angel to Mary, *the Lord is with thee.* In the fulness of grace He is with us, in the plenitude of glory we shall be with Him. He descends in order to be near to those who are of a troubled heart, that He may be with us in our trouble. . . . . It is better for me, O Lord, to be troubled, whilst only Thou art with me, than to reign without Thee, to feast without Thee, to be honoured without Thee. It is good rather to be embraced by Thee in trouble, to have thee in this furnace with me, than to be without Thee even in heaven. For what have I in heaven, and without Thee what do I desire upon earth? The furnace tries the gold, and the temptation of trouble just men.—*Bernard.*

Verse 15.—"*I will be with him trouble.*" God hath made promises of his special presence with his saints in suffering. If we have such a friend to visit us in prison, we shall do well enough; though we change our place, we shall not change our keeper. "*I will be with him.*" God will hold our head and heart when we are fainting! What if we have more afflictions than others, if we have more of God's company? God's honour is dear to him; it would not be for his honour to bring his children into sufferings, and leave them there; he will be with them to animate and support them; yea, when new troubles arise. Job. v. 19. "He shall deliver thee in six troubles."—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 15.—"*I will be with him in trouble.*" Again God speaks and acts like a tender-hearted mother towards a sickly child. When the child is in perfect health she can leave it in the hands of the nurse; but when it is sick she will attend it herself; she will say to the nurse, "You may attend a while to some other business, I will watch over the child myself." She hears the slightest moan; she flies to the cradle; she takes it in her arms; she kisses its lips, and drops a tear upon its face, and asks, "What can I do for thee, my child? How can I relieve thy pain and soften thy sufferings? Don't weep and break my heart; it is thy mother's arms that are around thee; it is thy mother's lap on which thou art laid; it is thy mother's voice that speaks to thee; it is thy mother that is with thee; fear not." So the Lord speaks to his afflicted children. "*I will be with him in trouble.*" No mother can equally sympathise with her suffering child; as the Lord does with his suffering people. No! could all the love that ever dwelt in all the mothers' hearts that ever existed, be united in one mother's heart, and fixed on her only child, it would no more bear a comparison with the love of God to his people than the summer midnight glow-worm is to be compared to the summer mid-day sun.

Oh, that delightful sentence "*I will be with him in trouble.*" At other times God will leave them in the hands of angels: "I will give them charge over them, to keep them in all their ways; they bear them up lest at any time they dash their feet against a stone." But when they are in trouble, I will say to the angels, "Stand aside, I will take care of them myself." "*I* will be with them in trouble." So he speaks to his people: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." When languishing in sickness, He will make his bed, and his pillow; when travelling through the valley of the shadow of death, the Lord will be with him, and enable him to sing, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Thus he is with them as their physician and nurse, in pain and sickness; as their strength in weakness; as their guide in difficulty; their ease in pain; and as their life in death. "*I will be with him in trouble.*"—*William Dawson.*

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Verse 16.—"*With long life will I satisfy him.*" Saint Bernard interprets this of *heaven;* because he thought nothing long that had an end. This, indeed, is the emphasis of heaven's joy; those blessed souls never sin, never weep more; they shall not only be with the Lord, but ever with the Lord. This is the accent which is set on the eulogies given to heaven in Scripture. 'Tis "an inheritance," and that an "incorruptible one, that fadeth not away;" it is "a crown of glory," and that a weighty one, yea, "an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory." When once it is on the saint's head it can never fall, or be snatched off; it is a feast, but such a one that hath a sitting down to it but no rising up from it.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 16.—"*With long life will I satisfy him.*" Observe the joyful contrast here to the mournful words in the foregoing Psalm. "We spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten," (xc. 9, 10.) The life of Israel in the wilderness was shortened by Disobedience. The Obedience of Christ in the wilderness has won for us a blessed immortality. —*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 16.—"*With long life will I satisfy him,*" etc. The margin here is "length of days;" that is, days lengthened out or multiplied. The meaning is, I will give him length of days as he desires, or until he is satisfied with life;—implying (1) that it is natural to desire long life; (2) that long life is to be regarded as a blessing (comp. Prov. iii. 2, 16; Ex. xx. 12); (3) that the tendency of religion is to lengthen out life; since virtue, temperance, regular industry, calmness of mind, moderation in all things, freedom from excesses in eating and drinking,—to all of which religion prompts,—contribute to health and to length of days; and (4) that a time will come, even under this promised blessing of length of days, when a man will be "*satisfied*" with living; when he will have no strong desire to live longer; when, under the infirmities of advanced years, and under his lonely feelings from the fact that his early friends have fallen, and under the influence of a bright hope of heaven, he will feel that he has had *enough* of life here, and that it is better to depart to another world. "*And shew him my salvation.*" In another life, after he shall be satisfied with this life.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 16.—"*With long life will I satisfy him.*" This promise concerning length of life contains a gift of God by no means to be despised. Many enemies indeed will plot against his life, and desire to extinguish him as suddenly and as quickly as possible; but I shall so guard him that he shall live to a good old age and be filled with years, and desire to depart from life.—*J. B. Folengius.*

Verse 16.—"*With long life will I satisfy him.*"

We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most, feels noblest, acts the best.

—*Philip James Bailey, in "Festus."*

Verse 16.—"*Long life.*"

They err who measure life by years,
With false or thoughtless tongue;
Some hearts grow old before their time;
Others are always young.

'Tis not the number of the lines
On life's fast filling page,
'Tis not the pulse's added throbs,
Which constitute their age.

Some souls are serfs among the free,
While others nobly thrive;
They stand just where their fathers stood
Dead, even while they live.

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Others, all spirit, heart, and sense,
  Theirs the mysterious power
To live in thrills of joy or woe,
  A twelvemonth in an hour!

Bryan W. Procter.

Verse 16.—"*Long life.*"

He liveth long who liveth well!
  All other life is short and vain;
He liveth longest who can tell
  Of living most for heavenly gain.

He liveth long who liveth well!
  All else is being flung away;
He liveth longest who can tell
  Of true things truly done each day.

Horatius Bonar.

Verse 16.—"*I will shew him my salvation.*" The last, greatest, climax of blessing, including and concluding all! What God does is perfectly done. Hitherto has his servant caught glimpses of the "great salvation." The Spirit has revealed step by step of it, as he was able to bear it. The Word has taught him, and he has rejoiced in his light. But all was seen *in part* and known *in part*. But when God has satisfied his servant with length of days, and time for him is over, eternity begun, he will "*shew him his salvation.*" All will be plain. All will be known. God will be revealed in his love and his glory. And we shall know all things, even as we are known!—*Mary B. M. Duncan.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—I. The secret dwelling-place. There is the dweller in the dark world, in the favoured land, in the holy city, in the outer court; but the holy of holies is the "secret place"—communion, acceptance, etc. II. The protecting shadow—security, peace, etc.; like hamlets of olden time clustered beneath castle walls.—*Charles A. Davis.*

Verse 1.—I. *The person.* One who is in intimate, personal, secret, abiding communion with God, dwelling near the mercy-seat, within the veil. II. The Privilege. He is the guest of God, protected, refreshed, and comforted by him, and that to all eternity.

Verses 1, 2.—Four names of God. I. We commune with him reverently, for he is the Most High. II. We rest in him as the Almighty. III. We rejoice in him as Jehovah or Lord. IV. We trust him as EL, the mighty God.

Verse 2.—I. Observe the nouns applied to God—refuge from trouble, fortress in trouble, God at all times. II. Observe the pronouns applied by man—"*I*" will say, "*my* refuge, my fortress," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—The power, excellence, fruit, reasonableness, and open avowal of personal faith.

Verse 3.—Invisible protection from invisible dangers; wisdom to meet cunning, love to war with cruelty, omnipresence to match mystery, life to baffle death.

Verse 3.—SURELY, or reasons for assured confidence in God's protection.

Verses 3—7.—Pestilence, panic, and peace; (for times of widespread disease).—*Charles A. Davis.*

Verses 3, 8, 9.—I. Saints are safe—"*surely,*" (verse 3). II. The evil is bounded—"*only,*" (verse 8). III. The Lord has reasons for preserving his own—"*because,*" (verse 9).

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Verse 4.—I. The compassion of God. II. The confidence of saints. III. The panoply of truth.

Verses 5, 6.—I. The exposure of all men to fear. 1. Continually, day and night. 2. Deservedly: "conscience doth make cowards of us all." II. The exemption of some men from fear. 1. Because of their trust. 2. Because of the divine protection.

Verse 7.—How an evil may be near but not nigh.

Verse 8.—What we have actually seen of the reward of the wicked.

Verses 9, 10.—I. God our spiritual habitation. II. God the keeper of our earthly habitation. III. General truth that the spiritual blesses the temporal.

Verse 10.—I. The Personal Blessing. II. The Domestic Blessing. III. The connection between the two.

Verses 14—16.—The six "I wills."

Verses 11, 12.—A "wrested" Scripture righted. I. Satan's version—presumptuousness. II. The Holy Spirit's version—trustfulness.—*Charles A. Davis.*

Verses 11, 12.—I. The Ministry of Angels as employed by God. 1. Official: "he shall give," etc. 2. Personal: "over thee." 3. Constant: "in all thy ways." II. As enjoyed by man. 1. For preservation: "shall bear thee," etc.; tenderly but effectually. 2. Under limitation. They cannot do the work of God, or of Christ, or of the Spirit, or of the word, or of ministers, for salvation; "are they not all ministering spirits," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 12.—Preservation from minor evils most precious because they are often most grievous, lead to greater evils, and involve much damage.

Verse 13.—The believer's love set upon God.

Verse 13.—I. Every child of God has his enemies. 1. They are numerous: "the lion, adder, young lion, dragon." 2. Diversified: subtle and powerful—"lion and adder;" new and old—"young lion" and the "old dragon." II. He will finally obtain a complete victory over them—"Thou shalt tread," etc.; "shall put thy foot," etc.; "the Lord shall bruise Satan," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 14.—Here we have, I. Love for love: "Because," etc. 1. The fact of the saints' love to God. There is, first, love in God without their love, then love for their love. 2. The evidence of his love to them: "I will deliver him"—from sin, from danger, from temptation, from every evil. II. Honour for honour. 1. His honouring God. "He hath known my name" and made it known; God honouring him; "I will set him on high"—high in honour, in happiness, in glory.—*G. R.*

Verses 15, 16.—Observe, I. The exceeding great and precious promises. 1. Answer to prayer: "he shall call," etc. 2. Comfort in trouble: "I will be with him." 3. Deliverance from trouble: "I will deliver him." 4. Greater honour after trouble: deliver "and honour him." 5. Length of days; life long enough to satisfy him. 6. God's salvation; "show him my salvation;" far beyond what man could think or desire. II. To whom these promises belong; who is the *he* and the *him* to whom these promises are made. He "calls upon God," says the fifteenth verse; he "hath known my name," says the verse preceding; he "hath set his love upon me," says the former part of the same verse; he "has made the Lord his habitation," says the ninth verse; he "dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High," says the first verse. Hannah More says, "To preach privileges without specifying to whom they belong is like putting a letter in the post-office without a direction." It may be very good and contain a valuable remittance, but no one can tell for whom it is intended. All the promises of Scripture are plainly directed to those to whom they belong. The direction put upon the promises of this Psalm is unmistakably clear and often repeated.—*G. R.*

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WORKS ON THE NINETY-FIRST PSALM.

S. Patris Bernardi, in Psalmum XC. [XCI.]. Qui habitat. *Sermones* [In the Paris edition of Bernard's works, imperial 8vo. 1839, Vol. I. part 2, also in the quarto vol. of Sermons, *Salisburgi* MDCLXVI.]

The Shield of the Righteous: or, the Ninety-first Psalme, expounded, with the addition of Doctrines and Vses. Verie necessarie and comfortable in these dayes of heauinesse, wherein the Pestilence rageth so sore in London, and other parts of this Kingdome. By ROBERT HORN, Minister of God's Word. . . . . London. 1628 [4to].

The Righteous man's Habitation in the Time of the Plague and Pestilence; being a brief Exposition of the Ninety-first Psalm: [In the Works of William Bridge (1600—1670) Tegg's Edition, Vol. I. pp. 468—500.]

In "UNDER THE SHADOW: *being additional leaves from the Note-Book of the late Mary B. M. Duncan,* 1867," pp. 85—172, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

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PSALM XCII.

TITLE—A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath-day. *This admirable composition is both a Psalm and a Song, full of equal measures of solemnity and joy; and it was intended to be sung upon the day of rest. The subject is the praise of God; praise is Sabbatic work, the joyful occupation of resting hearts. Since a true Sabbath can only be found in God, it is wise to meditate upon him on the Sabbath day. The style is worthy of the theme and of the day, its inspiration is from the "fount of every blessing"; David spake as the Spirit gave him utterance. In the church of Christ, at this hour, no Psalm is more frequently sung upon the Lord's day than the present. The delightful version of Dr. Watts is familiar to us all—*

> *"Sweet is the work, my God, my King,*
> *To praise thy name, give thanks, and sing;*
> *To shew thy love by morning light,*
> *And talk of all thy truth at night."*

The Sabbath was set apart for adoring the Lord in his finished work of creation, hence the suitableness of this Psalm; Christians may take even a higher flight, for they celebrate complete redemption. No one acquainted with David's style will hesitate to ascribe to him the authorship of this divine hymn; the ravings of the Rabbis who speak of its being composed by Adam, only need to be mentioned to be dismissed. Adam in Paradise had neither harps to play upon, nor wicked men to contend with.

EXPOSITION.

IT is a good *thing* to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High:

2 To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night,

3 Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound.

4 For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands.

1. "*It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord,*" or JEHOVAH. It is good ethically, for it is the Lord's right; it is good emotionally, for it is pleasant to the heart; it is good practically, for it leads others to render the same homage. When duty and pleasure combine, who will be backward? To give thanks to God is but a small return for the great benefits wherewith he daily loadeth us; yet as he by his Spirit calls it a good thing we must not despise it, or neglect it. We thank men when they oblige us, how much more ought we to bless the Lord when he benefits us. Devout praise is always good, it is never out of season, never superfluous, but it is especially suitable to the Sabbath; a Sabbath without thanksgiving is a Sabbath profaned. "*And to sing praises unto thy name, O most High.*" It is good to give thanks in the form of vocal song. Nature itself teaches us thus to express our gratitude to God; do not the birds sing, and the brooks warble as they flow? To give his gratitude a tongue is wise in man. Silent worship is sweet, but vocal worship is sweeter. To deny the tongue the privilege of uttering the praises of God involves an unnatural strain upon the most commendable promptings of our renewed manhood, and it is a problem to us how the members of the Society of Friends can deprive themselves of so noble, so natural, so inspiring a part of sacred worship. Good as they are, they miss one good thing when they decline to sing praises unto the name of the Lord. Our personal experience has confirmed us in the belief that it is good to sing unto the Lord; we have often felt like Luther when he said, "Come, let us sing a psalm, and drive away the devil."

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2. "*To shew forth thy loving-kindness in the morning.*" The day should begin with praise: no hour is too early for holy song. Loving-kindness is a most appropriate theme for those dewy hours when morn is sowing all the earth with orient pearl. Eagerly and promptly should we magnify the Lord; we leave unpleasant tasks as long as we can, but our hearts are so engrossed with the adoration of God that we would rise betimes to attend to it. There is a peculiar freshness and charm about early morning praises; the day is loveliest when it first opens its eyelids, and God himself seems then to make distribution of the day's manna, which tastes most sweetly if gathered ere the sun is hot. It seems most meet that if our hearts and harps have been silent through the shades of night we should be eager again to take our place among the chosen choir who ceaselessly hymn the Eternal One. "*And thy faithfulness every night.*" No hour is too late for praise, the end of the day must not be the end of gratitude. When nature seems in silent contemplation to adore its Maker, it ill becomes the children of God to refrain their thanksgiving. Evening is the time for retrospect, memory is busy with the experience of the day, hence the appropriate theme for song is the divine *faithfulness*, of which another day has furnished fresh evidences. When darkness has settled down o'er all things, "a shade immense," then there comes over wise men a congenial, meditative spirit, and it is most fitting that they should take an expanded view of the truth and goodness of Jehovah—

> "This sacred shade and solitude, what is it?
> 'Tis the felt presence of the Deity."

"*Every night,*" clouded or clear, moonlit or dark, calm or tempestuous, is alike suitable for a song upon the faithfulness of God, since in all seasons, and under all circumstances, it abides the same, and is the mainstay of the believer's consolation. Shame on us that we are so backward in magnifying the Lord, who in the daytime scatters bounteous love, and in the night season walks his rounds of watching care.

3. "*Upon an instrument of ten strings;*" with the fullest range of music, uttering before God with the full compass of melody the richest emotions of his soul. "*And upon the psaltery;*" thus giving variety to praise: the Psalmist felt that every sweet-sounding instrument should be consecrated to God. George Herbert and Martin Luther aided their private devotions by instrumental music; and whatever may have been the differences of opinion in the Christian church, as to the performance of instrumental music in public, we have met with no objection to its personal and private use. "*Upon the harp with a solemn sound,*" or upon *meditation with a harp;* as much as to say, my meditative soul is, after all, the best instrument, and the harp's dulcet tones comes in to aid my thoughts. It is blessed work when hand and tongue work together in the heavenly occupation of praise.

> "Strings and voices, hands and hearts,
> In the concert bear your parts:
> All that breathe, your God adore,
> Praise him, praise him, evermore."

It is, however, much to be feared that attention to the mere mechanism of music, noting keys and strings, bars and crotchets, has carried many away from the spiritual harmony which is the soul and essence of praise. Fine music without devotion is but a splendid garment upon a corpse.

4. "*For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work.*" It was natural for the psalmist to sing, because he was glad, and to sing unto the Lord, because his gladness was caused by a contemplation of the divine work. If we consider either creation or providence, we shall find overflowing reasons for joy; but when we come to review the work of redemption, gladness knows no bounds, but feels that she must praise the Lord with all her might. There are times when in the contemplation of redeeming love we feel that if we did not sing we must die; silence would be as horrible to us as if we were gagged by

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inquisitors, or stifled by murderers. "*I will triumph in the works of thy hands.*" I cannot help it, I must and I will rejoice in the Lord, even as one who has won the victory and has divided great spoil. In the first sentence of this verse he expresses the unity of God's *work*, and in the second the variety of his *works;* in both there is reason for gladness and triumph. When God reveals his work to a man, and performs a work in his soul, he makes his heart glad most effectually, and then the natural consequence is continual praise.

5 O LORD, how great are thy works! *and* thy thoughts are very deep.

6 A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this.

5. "*O Lord, how great are thy works!*" He is lost in wonder. He utters an exclamation of amazement. How vast! How stupendous are the doings of Jehovah! Great for number, extent, and glory and design are all the creations of the Infinite One. "*And thy thoughts are very deep.*" The Lord's plans are as marvellous as his acts; his designs are as profound as his doings are vast. Creation is immeasurable, and the wisdom displayed in it unsearchable. Some men think but cannot work, and others are mere drudges working without thought; in the Eternal the conception and the execution go together. Providence is inexhaustible, and the divine decrees which originate it are inscrutable. Redemption is grand beyond conception, and the thoughts of love which planned it are infinite. Man is superficial, God is inscrutable; man is shallow, God is deep. Dive as we may we shall never fathom the mysterious plan, or exhaust the boundless wisdom of the all-comprehending mind of the Lord. We stand by the fathomless sea of divine wisdom, and exclaim with holy awe, "O the depth!"

6. "*A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this.*" In this and the following verses the effect of the psalm is heightened by contrast; the shadows are thrown in to bring out the lights more prominently. What a stoop from the preceding verse; from the saint to the brute, from the worshipper to the boor, from the psalmist to the fool! Yet, alas, the character described here is no uncommon one. The boorish or boarish man, for such is almost the very Hebrew word, sees nothing in nature; and if it be pointed out to him, his foolish mind will not comprehend it. He may be a philosopher, and yet be such a brutish being that he will not own the existence of a Maker for the ten thousand matchless creations around him, which wear, even upon their surface, the evidences of profound design. The unbelieving heart, let it boast as it will, does not know; and with all its parade of intellect, it does not understand. A man must either be a saint or a brute, he has no other choice; his type must be the adoring seraph, or the ungrateful swine. So far from paying respect to great thinkers who will not own the glory or being of God, we ought to regard them as comparable to the beasts which perish, only vastly lower than mere brutes, because their degrading condition is of their own choosing. O God, how sorrowful a thing it is that men whom thou hast so largely gifted, and made in thine own image, should so brutify themselves that they will neither see nor understand what thou hast made so clear. Well might an eccentric writer say, "God made man a little lower than the angels at first, and he has been trying to get lower ever since."

7 When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; *it is* that they shall be destroyed for ever:

8 But thou, LORD, *art most* high for evermore.

9 For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.

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7. "*When the wicked spring as the grass,*" in abundance, and apparent strength, hastening on their progress like verdant plants, which come to perfection in a day, "*and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish;*" flowering in their prime and pride, their pomp and their prosperity; "*it is that they shall be destroyed for ever.*" They grow to die, they blossom to be blasted. They flower for a short space to wither without end. Greatness and glory are to them but the prelude of their overthrow. Little does their opposition matter, the Lord reigns on as if they had never blasphemed him; as a mountain abides the same though the meadows at its feet bloom or wither, even so the Most High is unaffected by the fleeting mortals who dare oppose him; they shall soon vanish for ever from among the living. But as for the wicked—how can our minds endure the contemplation of their doom "*for ever.*" Destruction "*for ever*" is a portion far too terrible for the mind to realise. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the full terror of the wrath to come!

8. "*But thou, Lord, art most high for evermore.*" This is the middle verse of the Psalm, and the great fact which this Sabbath song is meant to illustrate. God is at once the highest and most enduring of all beings. Others rise to fall, but he is the Most High to eternity. Glory be to his name! How great a God we worship! Who would not fear thee, O thou High Eternal One! The ungodly are destroyed for ever, and God is most high for ever; evil is cast down, and the Holy One reigns supreme eternally.

9. "*For, lo, thine enemies, O Lord.*" It is a wonder full of instruction and warning, observe it, O ye sons of men; "*for, lo, thine enemies shall perish;*" they shall cease from among men, they shall be known no more. In that the thing is spoken twice it is confirmed by the Lord, it shall surely be, and that speedily. "*All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered;*" their forces shall be dispersed, their hopes broken, and themselves driven hither and thither like chaff before the tempest. They shall scatter like timid sheep pursued by the lion, they will not have the courage to remain in arms, nor the unity to abide in confederacy. The grass cannot resist the scythe, but falls in withering ranks, even so are the ungodly cut down and swept away in process of time, while the Lord whom they despised sits unmoved upon the throne of his infinite dominion. Terrible as this fact is, no true-hearted man would wish to have it otherwise. Treason against the great Monarch of the universe ought not to go unpunished; such wanton wickedness richly merits the severest doom.

10 But my horn shalt thou exalt like *the horn of* an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil.

11 Mine eye also shall see *my desire* on mine enemies, *and* mine ears shall hear *my desire* of the wicked that rise up against me.

10. "*But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn.*" The believer rejoices that he shall not be suffered to perish, but shall be strengthened and enabled to triumph over his enemies, by the divine aid. The unicorn may have been some gigantic ox or buffalo now unknown, and perhaps extinct—among the ancients it was the favourite symbol of unconquerable power; the psalmist adopts it as his emblem. Faith takes delight in foreseeing the mercy of the Lord, and sings of what he will do as well as of what he has done. "*I shall be anointed with fresh oil.*" Strengthening shall be attended with refreshment and honour. As guests were anointed at feasts with perfumed unguents, so shall the saints be cheered and delighted by fresh outpourings of divine grace; and for this reason they shall not pass away like the wicked. Observe the contrast between the happiness of the brutish people and the joy of the righteous: the brutish men grow with a sort of vegetable vigour of their own, but the righteous are dealt with by the Lord himself, and all the good which they

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receive comes directly from his own right hand, and so is doubly precious in their esteem. The psalmist speaks in the first person, and it should be a matter of prayer with the reader that he may be enabled to do the same.

11. "*Mine eye also shall see* MY DESIRE *on mine enemies.*" The words, "my desire," inserted by the translators, had far better have been left out. He does not say what he should see concerning his enemies, he leaves that blank, and we have no right to fill in the vacant space with words which look vindictive. He would see that which would be for God's glory, and that which would be eminently right and just. "*And mine ears shall hear* MY DESIRE *of the wicked that rise up against me.*" Here, again, the words "my desire" are not inspired, and are a needless and perhaps a false interpolation. The good man is quite silent as to what he expected to hear; he knew that what he should hear would vindicate his faith in his God, and he was content to leave his cruel foes in God's hands, without an expression concerning his own desire one way or the other. It is always best to leave Scripture as we find it. The broken sense of inspiration is better let alone than pieced out with additions of a translator's own invention; it is like repairing pure gold with tinsel, or a mosaic of gems with painted wood. The holy psalmist had seen the beginning of the ungodly, and expected to see their end; he felt sure that God would right all wrongs, and clear his Providence from the charge of favouring the unjust; this confidence he here expresses, and sits down contentedly to wait the issues of the future.

12 The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

13 Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.

14 They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;

15 To shew that the LORD *is* upright: *he is* my rock, and *there is* no unrighteousness in him.

12. The song now contrasts the condition of the righteous with that of the graceless. The wicked "spring as the grass," but "*The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,*" whose growth may not be so rapid, but whose endurance for centuries is in fine contrast with the transitory verdure of the meadow. When we see a noble palm standing erect, sending all its strength upward in one bold column, and growing amid the dearth and drought of the desert, we have a fine picture of the godly man, who in his uprightness aims alone at the glory of God; and, independent of outward circumstances, is made by divine grace to live and thrive where all things else perish. The text tells us not only what the righteous is, but what he shall be; come what may, the good man shall flourish, and flourish after the noblest manner. "*He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*" This is another noble and long-lived tree. "As the days of a tree are the days of my people," saith the Lord. On the summit of the mountain, unsheltered from the blast, the cedar waves its mighty branches in perpetual verdure, and so the truly godly man under all adversities retains the joy of his soul, and continues to make progress in the divine life. Grass, which makes hay for oxen, is a good enough emblem of the unregenerate; but cedars, which build the temple of the Lord, are none too excellent to set forth the heirs of heaven.

13. "*Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.*" In the court-yards of Oriental houses trees were planted, and being thoroughly screened, they would be likely to bring forth their fruit to perfection in trying seasons; even so, those who by grace are brought into communion with the Lord, shall be likened to trees planted in the Lord's house, and shall find it good to their souls. No heart has so much joy as that

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which abides in the Lord Jesus. Fellowship with the stem begets fertility in the branches. If a man abide in Christ he brings forth much fruit. Those professors who are rooted to the world do not flourish; those who send forth their roots into the marshes of frivolous pleasure cannot be in a vigorous condition; but those who dwell in habitual fellowship with God shall become men of full growth, rich in grace, happy in experience, mighty in influence, honoured and honourable. Much depends upon the soil in which a tree is planted; everything, in our case, depends upon our abiding in the Lord Jesus, and deriving all our supplies from him. If we ever really grow in the courts of the Lord's house we must be planted there, for no tree grows in God's garden self-sown; once planted of the Lord, we shall never be rooted up, but in his courts we shall take root downward, and bring forth fruit upward to his glory for ever.

14. "*They shall still bring forth fruit in old age.*" Nature decays but grace thrives. Fruit, as far as nature is concerned, belongs to days of vigour; but in the garden of grace, when plants are weak in themselves, they become strong in the Lord, and abound in fruit acceptable with God. Happy they who can sing this Sabbath Psalm, enjoying the rest which breathes through every verse of it; no fear as to the future can distress them, for their evil days, when the strong man faileth, are the subject of a gracious promise, and therefore they await them with quiet expectancy. Aged believers possess a ripe experience, and by their mellow tempers and sweet testimonies they feed many. Even if bedridden, they bear the fruit of patience; if poor and obscure, their lowly and contented spirit becomes the admiration of those who know how to appreciate modest worth. Grace does not leave the saint when the keepers of the house do tremble; the promise is still sure though the eyes can no longer read it; the bread of heaven is fed upon when the grinders fail; and the voice of the Spirit in the soul is still melodious when the daughters of music are brought low. Blessed be the Lord for this! Because even to hoar hairs he is the I AM, who made his people, he therefore bears and carries them.

"*They shall be fat and flourishing.*" They do not drag out a wretched, starveling existence, but are like trees ful of sap, which bear luxuriant foliage. God does not pinch his poor servants, and diminish their consolations when their infirmities grow upon them; rather does he see to it that they shall renew their strength, for their mouths shall be satisfied with his own good things. Such an one as Paul the aged would not ask our pity, but invite our sympathetic gratitude; however feeble his outward man may be, his inner man is so renewed day by day that we may well envy his perennial peace.

15. This mercy to the aged proves the faithfulness of their God, and leads them "*to shew that the Lord is upright,*" by their cheerful testimony to his ceaseless goodness. We do not serve a Master who will run back from his promise. Whoever else may defraud us, he never will. Every aged Christian is a letter of commendation to the immutable fidelity of Jehovah. "*He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.*" Here is the psalmist's own seal and sign manual; still was he building upon his God, and still was the Lord a firm foundation for his trust. For shelter, for defence, for indwelling, for foundation, God is our rock; hitherto he has been to us all that he said he would be, and we may be doubly sure that he will abide the same even unto the end. He has tried us, but he has never allowed us to be tempted above what we are able to bear: he has delayed our reward, but he has never been unrighteous to forget our work of faith and labour of love. He is a friend without fault, a helper without fail. Whatever he may do with us, he is always in the right; his dispensations have no flaw in them, no, not the most minute. He is true and righteous altogether, and so we weave the end of the psalm with its beginning, and make a coronet of it, for the head of our Beloved. "*It is a good thing to sing praises unto the Lord,*" for "*he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.*"

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EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—This is entitled "*A Psalm to be sung on the day of the Sabbath.*" It is known that the Jews appropriated certain Psalms to particular days. R. Selomo thinks that it refers to the future state of the blessed, which is a perpetual sabbath. Others pretend that it was composed by Adam, on the seventh day of the creation. It might, with more probability, have been supposed to be put, by a poetic fiction, into the mouth of Adam, beholding, with wonder and gratitude, the recent creation. But ver. 2 seems to refer to the morning and evening sacrifice, which the psalmist considers as most proper for prayer and praise.—*D. Cresswell.*

Title.—"*For the Sabbath day.*" Perchance, as *Lud. de Dieu* remarks on this place, every day of the week had its allotted psalms, according to what is said in the *Talmud*, lib. קדשים. The songs which the Levites formerly sang in the sanctuary are these: on the first day, Ps. xxiv.; on the second, Ps. xlviii.; on the third, Ps. lxxxii.; on the fourth, the 104th; on the fifth, the 81st; on the sixth, the 93rd; on the seventh, the 92nd, the beginning of which is, *a psalm or a canticle for the Sabbath day*, that is to say, for the future age, which will be altogether a sabbath.—*Martin Geier.*

Title.—"*For the Sabbath.*"—It is observable that the name JEHOVAH occurs in the Psalms seven times—the sabbatical number (1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 13, 15).—*C. Wordsworth.*

Verse 1.—"*It is a good thing.*" It is *bonum, honestum, jucundum, utile;* an honest, pleasant, and profitable good. The altar of incense was to be overlaid with pure gold, and to have a crown of gold round about it. Which (if we may allegorically apply it) intimateth unto us, that the spiritual incense of prayers and praises is rich and precious, a golden and a royal thing.—*Henry Jeanes, in "The Works of Heaven upon Earth,"* 1649.

Verse 1.—"*It is a good thing to give thanks,*" etc. Giving of thanks is more noble and perfect in itself than petition; because in petition often our own good is eyed and regarded, but in giving of thanks only God's honour. The Lord Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Now, a subordinate end of petition is to receive some good from God, but the sole end of thanks is to give glory unto God.—*William Ames* (1576—1633), *in "Medulla Theologica."*

Verse 1.—"*Give thanks;*" "*praises.*" We thank God for his benefits, and praise him for his perfections.—*Filliucius, out of Aquinas.*

Verse 1.—"*To sing praises.*" 1. *Singing is the music of nature.* The Scriptures tell us, the mountains sing (Isai. xliv. 23); the valleys sing (Psalm lxv. 13); the trees of the wood sing (1 Chron. xvi. 33). Nay, the air is the birds' music-room, where they chant their musical notes.

2. *Singing is the music of ordinances.* Augustine reports of himself, that when he came to Milan and heard the people sing, he wept for joy in the church to hear that pleasing melody. And Beza confesses, that at his first entrance into the congregation, and hearing them sing Ps. xci. he felt himself exceedingly comforted, and did retain the sound of it afterwards upon his heart. The Rabbis tell us, that the Jews, after the feast of the Passover was celebrated, sang Psalm cxi., and the five following psalms; and our Saviour and his apostles "sang an hymn" immediately after the blessed supper, (Matt. xxvi. 30).

3. *Singing is the music of saints.* (1) They have performed this duty in their greatest numbers, (Psalm cxlix. 1). (2.) In their greatest straits, (Isai. xxvi. 19). (3.) In their greatest flight, (Isai. xlii. 10, 11). (4.) In their greatest deliverances, (Isai. lxv. 14). (5.) In their greatest plenties. In all these changes singing hath been their stated duty and delight. And indeed it is meet that the saints and servants of God should sing forth their joys and

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praises to the Lord Almighty; every attribute of him can set both their song and their tune.

4. *Singing is the music of angels.* Job tells us, "The morning stars sang together," (Job xxxviii. 7). Now these morning stars, as Pineda tells us, are the angels; to which the Chaldee paraphrase accords, naming these morning stars, *aciem angelorum*, "a host of angels." Nay, when this heavenly host was sent to proclaim the birth of our dearest Jesus, they delivered their message in this raised way of duty, (Luke ii. 13). They were αἰνούντων, delivering their messages in a "laudatory singing," the whole company of angels making a musical choir. Nay, in heaven, there is the angels' joyous music, they there sing hallelujahs to the Most High, and to the Lamb who sits upon the throne, (Rev. v. 11, 12).

5. *Singing is the music of heaven.* The glorious saints and angels accent their praises this way, and make one harmony in their state of blessedness; and this is the music of the bride-chamber, (Rev. xv. 3). The saints who were tuning here their psalms, are now singing hallelujahs in a louder strain, and articulating their joys, which here they could not express to their perfect satisfaction. Here they laboured with drowsy hearts, and faltering tongues; but in glory these impediments are removed, and nothing is left to jar their joyous celebrations.—*John Wells* (—1676), *in* "*The Morning Exercises.*"

Verse 2.—"*In the morning.*" When indeed the mind after the rest of the night is more active, devoted and constant. In other parts of the day, as at noon, or in the afternoon, many sounds of business disturb, and greater lassitude oppresses. Compare Pss. v. 4, lix. 17, lxiii. 2, lxxxviii. 14, cxix. 147, 148, where this same part of the day is celebrated as the fittest for sacred meditations. However, this ought not to be taken exclusively, as if, in the morning alone, and not also at noon or in the evening, it was suitable to celebrate divine grace.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 2.—"*In the morning.*" The Brahmins rise three hours before the sun, to pray. The Indians would esteem it a great sin to eat in the morning before praying to their gods. The ancient Romans considered it impious if they had not a little chamber, in their house, appropriated to prayer. Let us take a lesson from these Turks and heathen; their zealous ardour ought to shame us. Because we possess the true light, should their zeal surpass ours?—*Frederic Arndt, in* "*Lights of the Morning,*" 1861.

Verse 2.—"*To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning.*" Our praise ought to be suitably arranged. In the time of prosperity or the *morning* we should declare thy lovingkindness, because whatever of prosperity we have proceeds from the mercy and grace of God; and in the time of adversity or *night*, we should declare thy justice or faithfulness, because whatever adversity happens to us is ordained by the just judgment of God.—*J. Turrecremata.*

Verse 2.—God's "*mercy*" is itself the *morning ray*, which scatters away darkness (xxx. 5, lix. 16); his "*faithfulness*" the guardian, that assures us against *night peril.*—*F. Delitzsch.*

Verse 2.—"*In the morning, and . . every night.*" God is Alpha and Omega. It is fit we should begin and end the day with his praise, who begins and ends it for us with mercy. Well, thou seest thy duty plainly laid before thee. As thou wouldst have God prosper thy labour in the day, and sweeten thy rest in the night, clasp them both together with thy morning and evening devotions. He that takes no care to set forth God's portion of time in the morning, doth not only rob God of his due, but is a thief to himself all the day after, by losing the blessing which a faithful prayer might bring from heaven on his undertakings. And he that closeth his eyes at night without prayer, lies down before his bed is made.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 2.—"*Thy faithfulness* (Vulg. '*veritas,*') *every night.*" Truth can be taken in its proper signification. Thus St. Jerome on our Psalm takes it,

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and says: "The truth of the Lord is announced in the night, as if it were wrapped up in some verbal obscurities. In an enigma it is spoken, and in parables; that seeing, they should not see, and hearing, they should not understand. Moses ascended Mount Sinai, Exod. xxiv., and passed into the tempest and into the blackness and darkness, and there spake with the Lord." Thus Jerome. Christ brings back the light to us, as Lactantius teaches. Shall we wait, says he, till Socrates shall know something? Or Anaxagoras find light in the darkness? Or Democritus draw forth the truth from a well? Or till Empedocles expands the paths of his soul? Or Ascesilas and Carneades see, feel, and perceive? Behold a voice from heaven teaches us the truth, and reveals it more clearly to us than the sun himself. . . . . In the night truth is to be shown forth, that the night may be turned into day.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 3.—"*Upon an instrument of ten strings.*" Eusebius, in his comment on this psalm, says: "*The psaltery of ten strings* is the worship of the Holy Spirit performed by means of the *five* senses of the body, and by the *five* powers of the soul." And to confirm this interpretation, he quotes the apostle, 1 Cor. xiv. 15: "I will pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also." "As the mind has its influence by which it moves the body, so the spirit has its own influence by which it moves the soul." Whatever may be thought of this gloss, one thing is pretty evident from it, that *instrumental music* was not in use in the church of Christ in the time of Eusebius, which was near the middle of the *fourth* century. Had any such thing then existed in the Christian Church, he would have doubtless alluded to or spiritualized it; or, as he quoted the words of the apostle above, would have shown that *carnal usages* were substituted for *spiritual exercises.—Adam Clarke.*

Verse 3.—In Augustine to Ambrose there is the following passage bearing on this same subject:—"Sometimes, from over jealousy, I would entirely put from me and from the church the melodies of the sweet chants that we use in the Psalter, lest our ears seduce us; and the way of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, seems the safe one, who, as I have often heard, made the reader chant with so slight a change of voice, that it was more like speaking than singing. And yet, when I call to mind the tears I shed when I heard the chants of thy church in the infancy of my recovered faith, and reflect that I was affected, not by the mere music, but by the subject, brought out as it were by clear voices and appropriate tune, then, in turn, I confess how useful is the practice."

Verse 3.—We are not to conceive that God enjoyed the harp as feeling a delight like ourselves in mere melody of sounds; but the Jews, who were yet under age, were restricted to the use of such childish elements. The intention of them was to stimulate the worshippers, and stir them up more actively to the celebration of the praise of God with the heart. We are to remember that the worship of God was never understood to consist in such outward services, which were only necessary to help forward a people, as yet weak and rude in knowledge, in the spiritual worship of God. A difference is to be observed in this respect between his people under the Old and under the New Testament; for now that Christ has appeared, and the church has reached full age, it were only to bury the light of the Gospel, should we introduce the shadows of a departed dispensation. From this, it appears that the Papists, in employing instrumental music, cannot be said so much to imitate the practice of God's ancient people, as to ape it in a senseless and absurd manner, exhibiting a silly delight in that worship of the Old Testament which was figurative, and terminated with the gospel.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 3.—Chrysostom says, "Instrumental music was only permitted to the Jews, as sacrifice was, for the heaviness and grossness of their souls. God condescended to their weakness, because they were lately drawn off from idols;

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but now instead of organs, we may use our own bodies to praise him withal." Theodoret has many like expressions in his comments upon the Psalms and other places. But the author under the name of Justin Martyr is more express in his determination, as to matter of fact, telling us plainly, "that the use of singing with instrumental music was not received in the Christian churches as it was among the Jews in their infant state, but only the use of plain song."—*Joseph Bingham.*

Verse 3.—Instrumental music, the more I think of it, appears with increasing evidence to be utterly unsuited to the genius of the gospel dispensation. There was a glare, if I may so express it, which characterized even the divine appointments of Judaism. An august temple, ornamented with gold and silver, and precious stones, golden candlesticks, golden altars, priests in rich attire, trumpets, cymbals, harps; all of which were adapted to an age and dispensation when the church was in a state of infancy. But when the substance is come, it is time that the shadows flee away The best exposition of harps in singing is given by Dr. Watts—

"Oh may my heart in tune be found,
Like David's harp of solemn sound."

—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—"*On meditation with a harp.*" [New translation.] By a bold but intelligible figure, *meditation* is referred to as an instrument, precisely as the lyre and harp are, the latter being joined with it as a mere accompaniment.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 3.—"*With a solemn sound.*" Let Christians abound as much as they will in the holy, heavenly exercise of singing in God's house and in their own houses; but let it be performed as a holy act, wherein they have immediately and visibly to do with God. When any social open act of devotion or solemn worship of God is performed, God should be reverenced as present. As we would not have the ark of God depart from us, nor provoke God to make a breach upon us, we should take heed that we handle the ark with reverence.—*Jonathan Edwards, in "Errors connected with singing praises to God."*

Verse 4.—"*Thou* LORD *hast made me glad through thy work.*" One of the parts of the well-spending of the Sabbath, is the looking upon, and consideration of the works of creation. The consideration of the Lord's works will afford us much sweet refreshment and joy when God blesses the meditation; and when it is so we ought to acknowledge our gladness most thankfully and lift up our heart in his ways.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—"*Thy work.*" The "work of God" here is one no less marvellous than that of creation, which was the original ground of hallowing the Sabbath (see title of this Psalm)—namely, the final redemption of his people.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 4.—"*Made me glad through thy work,*" etc. Surely there is nothing in the world, short of the most undivided reciprocal attachment, that has such power over the workings of the human heart as the mild sweetness of Nature. The most ruffled temper, when emerging from the town, will subside into a calm at the sight of an extended landscape reposing in the twilight of a fine evening. It is then that the spirit of peace settles upon the heart, unfetters the thoughts, and elevates the soul to the Creator. It is then that we behold the Parent of the universe in his works; we see his grandeur in earth, sea, sky; we feel his affection in the emotions which they raise, and half-mortal, half-etherealized, forgot where we are in the anticipation of what that world must be, of which this lovely earth is merely the shadow.—*Miss Porter.*

Verse 4.—"*I will triumph in the works of thy hands.*" Here it will be most fitting to remind the reader of those three great bursts of adoring song, which in different centuries have gushed forth from souls enraptured with the sight of nature. They are each of them clear instances of triumphing in the works of

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God's hands. How majestically Milton sang when he said of our unfallen parents,—

> "Nor holy rapture wanted they to praise
> Their Maker, in fit strains pronounc'd or sung
> Unmeditated; such prompt eloquence
> Flow'd from their lips in prose or numerous verse,
> More tunable than needed lute or harp
> To add more sweetness."

Then he gives us that noble hymn, too well-known for us to quote, the reader will find it in the fifth book of the Paradise Lost, commencing—

> "These are thy glorious works, Parent of good, Almighty!"

Thomson also, in his Seasons, rises to a wonderful height, as he closes his poem with a hymn—

> "These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
> Are but the varied God."

Coleridge in his "Hymn before Sun-rise, in the Vale of Chamouni," equally well treads the high places of triumphant devotion, as he cries—

> "Awake my soul! not only passive praise
> Thou owest! not alone these swelling tears,
> Mute thanks and secret ecstacy! Awake,
> Voice of sweet song! Awake, my heart, awake!
> Green vales and icy cliffs, all join my hymn."

Verse 5.—"*Thy thoughts.*" The plural of מַחֲשָׁבָה, from the verb חָשַׁב, to meditate, to count, to *weave;* and this last word gives a good idea of what is here made the subject of admiration and praise, the wonderful intricacy and contrivance with which the Divine Mind designs and executes his plans, till at length the result is seen in a beautifully woven tissue of many delicately mingled and coloured threads.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy thoughts are very deep.*" Verily, my brethren, there is no sea so deep as these thoughts of God, who maketh the wicked flourish, and the good suffer: nothing so profound, nothing so deep; therein every unbelieving soul is wrecked, in that depth, in that profundity. Dost thou wish to cross this depth? Remove not from the wood of Christ's cross; and thou shalt not sink: hold thyself fast to Christ.—*Augustine.*

Verse 6.—Expressively he wrote: "The *man-brute* will not know; the fool will not understand this," viz., that when the wicked spring up with rapid and apparently vigorous growth as the summer flowers in Palestine, it is that they may ripen soon for a swift destruction. The *man-brute* precisely translates the Hebrew words; one whom God has endowed with manhood, but who has debased himself to brutehood; a man as being of God's creation in his own image, but a brute as being self-moulded (shall we say self-made?) into the image of the baser animals!—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 6.—"*A brutish man knoweth not,*" etc. A sottish sensualist who hath his *soul for salt* only, to keep his body from putrefying (as we say of swine) he takes no knowledge of God's great works, but grunts and goes his ways, contenting himself with a natural use of the creatures, as beasts do.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 6.—"*A brutish man knoweth not,*" etc. That is, he being a beast, and having no sanctified principle of wisdom in him, looks no further than a beast into all the works of God and occurrences of things; looks on all blessings as things provided for man's delight by God; but he extracts seldom holy, spiritual, and useful thoughts out of all, he wants the art of doing it.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 6.—"*A brutish man knoweth not.*" How universally do men strive, by the putrid joys of sense and passion, to destroy the fineness of the sensibilities which God has given them. This mind, which might behold a world of

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glory in created things, and look through them as through a transparent veil to things infinitely *more* glorious, signified or contained within the covering, is as dull and heavy as a piece of anthracite coal. Who made it so? Alas, habits of sense and sin have done this. If from childhood the soul had been educated for God, in habits accordant with its spiritual nature, it would be full of life, love, and sensibility, in harmony with all lovely things in the natural world, beholding the spiritual world through the natural, alive to all excitement from natural and intellectual beauty, and as ready to its duty as a child to its play. What a dreadful destruction of the mind's inner sensibilities results from a sensual life! What a decline, decay, and paralysis of its intuitive powers, so that the very existence of such a thing as spiritual intuition, in reference to a spiritual world, may be questioned, if not denied!

A man may be frightfully successful in such a process of destruction if long enough continued, upon his own nature. "Who can read without indignation of Kant," remarks De Quincey, "that at his own table in social sincerity and confidential talk, let him say what he would in his books, he exulted in the prospect of absolute and ultimate annihilation; that he planted his glory in the grave, and was ambitious of rotting for ever! The King of Prussia, though a personal friend of Kant's, found himself obliged to level his State thunders at some of his doctrines, and terrified him in his advance; else I am persuaded that Kant would have formally delivered Atheism from the professor's chair, and would have enthroned the horrid ghoulish creed, which privately he professed, in the University of Königsberg. It required the artillery of a great king to make him pause. The fact is, that as the stomach has been known by means of its natural secretion, to attack not only whatsoever alien body is introduced within it, but also (as John Hunter first showed), sometimes to attack itself and its own organic structure; so, and with the same preternatural extension of instinct, did Kant carry forward his destroying functions, until he turned them upon his own hopes, and the pledges of his own superiority to the dog, the ape, the worm."—*George B. Cheever, in "Voices of Nature,"* 1852.

Verse 6.—"*A fool.*" The simpleton is an automaton, he is a machine, he is worked by a spring; mere gravity carries him forward, makes him move, makes him turn, and that unceasingly and in the same way, and exactly with the same equable pace: he is uniform, he is never inconsistent with himself; whoever has seen him once, has seen him at all moments, and in all periods of his life; he is like the ox that bellows, or the blackbird which whistles; that which is least visible in him is his soul; it does not act, it is not exercised, it takes its rest.—*Jean de la Bruyère* (1639—1696), *quoted by Ramaye.*

Verse 6.—"*Neither doth a fool understand this.*"

He roved among the vales and streams,
  In the green wood and hollow dell;
They were his dwellings night and day,—
But nature ne'er could find the way
  Into the heart of Peter Bell.

In vain, through every changeful year,
  Did Nature lead him as before;
A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
  And it was nothing more.

In vain, through water, earth, and air,
  The soul of happy sound was spread,
When Peter on some April morn,
Beneath the broom or budding thorn,
  Made the warm earth his lazy bed.

At noon, when by the forest's edge
  He lay beneath the branches high,
The soft blue sky did never melt
Into his heart; he never felt
  The witchery of the soft blue sky!

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There was a hardness in his cheek,
  There was a hardness in his eye,
As if the man had fixed his face,
In many a solitary place,
  Against the wind and open sky.

W. Wordsworth, 1770—1850.

Verse 7.—"*When the wicked spring as the grass,*" etc. Their felicity is the greatest infelicity.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 7.—Little do they think that they are suffered to prosper that like *beasts* they may be fitter for slaughter. The fatter they are, the fitter for slaughter, and the sooner slain: "He slew the fattest of them." Ps. lxxviii., 31. —*Zachary Bogan.*

Verse 8.—Here is the central pivot of the Psalm. "*But thou, Lord, art most high for evermore,*" *lit.* "art *height,*" &c., the abstract used for the concrete, to imply that the essence of all that is *high* is concentrated in Jehovah. When God and the cause of holiness *seem low*, God *is really* never higher than then; for out of seeming weakness he perfects the greatest strength. When the wicked seem *high*, they are then on the verge of being cast down for ever. The believer who can realize this will not despair at the time of his own depression, and of the seeming exaltation of the wicked. If we can feel "*Jehovah most high for evermore,*" we can well be unruffled, however low we lie.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 9.—"*Lo thine enemies;*" "*lo thine enemies.*" He represents their destruction as present, and as certain, which the repetition of the words implies. —*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 9.—"*Thine enemies shall perish.*" This is the only Psalm in the Psalter which is designated a Sabbath-song. The older Sabbath was a type of our rest in Christ from sin; and therefore the final extirpation of sin forms one of the leading subjects of the psalm.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 9.—"*All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.*" The wicked may unite and confederate together, but the bands of their society are feeble. It is seldom that they long agree together; at least as to the particular object of their pursuit. Though they certainly harmonize in the general one, that of working iniquity. But God will soon by his power, and in his wrath, confound and scatter them even to destruction.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 10.—"*Thou shalt lift up, as a rĕĕym, my horn,*" seems to point to the mode in which the *bovidæ* use their horns, lowering the head and then tossing it up.—*William Houghton, in Smith's Bible Dictionary.*

Verse 10.—"*The horn of an unicorn.*"—After discussing the various accounts which are given of this animal by ancient and modern writers, Winer says, I do not hesitate to say, it is the *Antelope Leucoryx*, a species of goat with long and sharp horns.—*William Walford.*

Verse 10.—"*I shall be anointed with fresh oil.*" Montanus has, instead of "*fresh oil,*" given the literal meaning of the original *virido oleo*, "*with green oil.*" Ainsworth also renders it: "*fresh or green oil.*" The remark of Calmet is: "The plants imparted somewhat of their colour, as well as of their fragrance, hence the expression, '*green oil.*'" Harmer says, "I shall be anointed with green oil." Some of these writers think the term *green*, as it is in the original, signifies "precious fragrant oil;" others, literally "green" in colour; and others, "fresh" or newly-made oil. But I think it will appear to mean "cold-drawn oil," that which has been expressed or squeezed from the nut or fruit without the process of boiling. The Orientals prefer this kind to all others for anointing themselves; it is considered the most precious, the most pure and efficacious. Nearly all their medicinal oils are thus extracted;

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and because they cannot gain so much by this method as by the boiling process, oils so drawn are very dear. Hence their name for the article thus prepared is also *patche*, that is, "*green oil.*" But this term, in Eastern phraseology, is applied to other things which are unboiled or raw: thus unboiled water is called *patchi-tameer*, "*green* water:" *patche-pal*, likewise, "*green* milk," means that which has not been boiled, and the butter made from it is called "*green* butter;" and uncooked meat or yams are known by the same name. I think, therefore, the Psalmist alludes to that valuable article which is called "*green* oil," on account of its being expressed from the nut or fruit, without the process of boiling.—*Joseph Roberts's Oriental Illustrations.*

Verse 10.—"*Anointed with fresh oil.*" Every kind of benediction and refreshment I have received, do receive, and shall receive, like one at a feast, who is welcomed as a friend, and whose *head* is copiously anointed with oil or fragrant balm. In this way, the spirits are gently refreshed, an inner joyousness excited, the beauty of the face and limbs, according to the custom of the country, brought to perfection. Or, there is an allusion to the custom of *anointing* persons at their solemn installation in some splendid office. Compare Ps. xxiii. 5 "*Thou anointest my head with oil*, and Ps. xlv. 7, "*God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness.*"—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 10 (*last clause*).—The phrase is not "I am anointed," מָשַׁח; but בָּלוּתִי, *imbutus sum—perfusus sum;* apparently in reference to the abundance of perfume employed on the occasion, viz., his being elected King over all the tribes, as indicative of the greater popularity of the act, or the higher measure of Jehovah's blessing on his people. The difference, indeed, between the first anointing of David and that of Saul, as performed by Samuel, is well worthy of notice on the present occasion. When Samuel was commanded to anoint Saul, he "took a *vial* of oil, and poured it upon his head," in private, 1 Sam. xvi. 13. Here we find the horn again made use of, and apparently full to the brim—*David was soaked or imbued with it.—John Mason Good.*

Verse 11.—"*Mine enemies.*"—The word here used שׁוּר *shur*—occurs nowhere else. It means, properly, a lier-in-wait, one who *watches;* one who is in ambush; and refers to persons who *watched* his conduct; who *watched* for his ruin.—*A. Barnes.*

Verse 12.—"*Like the palm tree.*" Look now at those stately palm-trees, which stand here and there on the plain, like military sentinels, with feathery plumes nodding gracefully on their proud heads. The stem, tall, slender, and erect as Rectitude herself, suggests to the Arab poets many a symbol for their lady-love; and Solomon, long before them, has sung, "How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights! This thy stature is like a palm-tree" (S. Song vii. 6, 7). Yes; and Solomon's father says, "*The righteous shall flourish like a palm-tree,*" etc. The royal poet has derived more than one figure from the customs of men, and the habits of this noble tree, with which to adorn his sacred ode. The palm grows slowly, but steadily, from century to century uninfluenced by those alternations of the seasons which affect other trees. It does not rejoice over much in winter's copious rain, nor does it droop under the drought and the burning sun of summer. Neither heavy weights which men place upon its head, nor the importunate urgency of the wind, can sway it aside from perfect uprightness. There it stands, looking calmly down upon the world below, and patiently yielding its large clusters of golden fruit from generation to generation. They "*bring forth fruit in old age.*"

The allusion to being "*planted in the house of the Lord*" is probably drawn from the custom of planting beautiful and long-lived trees in the courts of temples and palaces, and in all "high places" used for worship. This is still common; nearly every palace, and mosque, and convent in the country has such trees in the courts, and being well protected there, they flourish exceedingly.

Solomon covered all the walls of the "Holy of Holies" round about with

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palm-trees. They were thus planted, as it were, within the very house of the Lord; and their presence there was not only ornamental, but appropriate and highly suggestive. The very best emblem, not only of patience in well-doing, but of the rewards of the righteous—a fat and flourishing old age—a peaceful end—a glorious immortality.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 12.—"*The palm tree.*" The palms were entitled by Linnæus, "the princes of the vegetable world;" and Von Martius enthusiastically says, "The common-world atmosphere does not become these vegetable monarchs: but in those genial climes where nature seems to have fixed her court, and summons around her of flowers, and fruits, and trees, and animated beings, a galaxy of beauty,—there they tower up into the balmy air, rearing their majestic stems highest and proudest of all. Many of them, at a distance, by reason of their long perpendicular shafts, have the appearance of columns, erected by the Divine architect, bearing up the broad arch of heaven above them, crowned with a capital of gorgeous green foliage." And Humboldt speaks of them as "the loftiest and stateliest of all vegetable forms." To these, above all other trees, the prize of beauty has always been awarded by every nation, and it was from the Asiatic palm world, or the adjacent countries, that human civilization sent forth the first rays of its early dawn.

On the northern borders of the Great Desert, at the foot of the Atlas mountains, the groves of date palms form the great feature of that parched region, and few trees besides can maintain an existence. The excessive dryness of this arid tract, where rain seldom falls, is such that wheat refuses to grow, and even barley, maize, and Caffre corn, (Holcus sorghum,) afford the husbandman only a scanty and uncertain crop. The hot blasts from the south are scarcely supportable even by the native himself, and yet here forests of date palms flourish, and form a screen impervious to the rays of the sun, beneath the shade of which the lemon, the orange, and the pomegranate, are cherished, and the vine climbs up by means of its twisted tendrils; and although reared in constant shade, all these fruits acquire a more delicious flavour than in what would seem a more favourable climate. How beautiful a comment do these facts supply to the words of Holy Writ, "*The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree!*" Unmoved by the scorching and withering blasts of temptations or persecutions, the Christian sustained by the secret springs of Divine grace, lives and grows in likeness to his Divine Master, when all others are overcome, and their professions wither. How striking is the contrast in the psalm. The wicked and worldlings are compared to grass, which is at best but of short duration, and which is easily withered; but the emblem of the Christian is the palm tree, which stands for centuries. Like the grateful shade of the palm groves, the Christian extends around him a genial, sanctified, and heavenly influence; and just as the great value of the date palm lies in its abundant, wholesome, and delicious fruit, so do those who are the true disciples of Christ abound in "fruits of righteousness," for, said our Saviour, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."—"*The Palm Tribes and their Varieties.*" *R. T. Society's Monthly Volume.*

Verse 12.—"*The righteous shall flourish.*" David here tells us *how* he shall flourish. "He shall flourish *like the palm tree:* he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." Of the wicked he had said just before, "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." They flourish as the *grass*, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven. What a contrast with the worthlessness, the weakness, transitoriness, and destiny, of grass—in a warm country too—are the palm tree and cedar of Lebanon! They are evergreens. How beautifully, how firmly, how largely, they grow! How strong and lofty is the cedar! How upright, and majestic, and tall, the palm tree. The palm also bears fruit, called dates, like bunches of grapes. It sometimes yields a hundredweight at once.

He tells us *where* he shall flourish. "Those that be planted in the house of

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the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." The allusion is striking. It compares the house of God to a garden, or fine well-watered soil, favourable to the life, and verdure, and fertility, of the trees fixed there. The reason is, that in the sanctuary we have the communion of saints. *There* our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. *There* are dispensed the ordinances of religion, and the word of truth. *There* God commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore.

He also tells us *when* he shall flourish. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age." This is to show the permanency of their principles, and to distinguish them from natural productions.

> "The plants of grace shall ever live;
> Nature decays, but grace must thrive;
> Time, that doth all things else impair,
> Still makes them flourish strong and fair."

The young Christian is lovely, like a tree in the blossoms of spring: the aged Christian is valuable, like a tree in autumn, bending with ripe fruit. We therefore look for something superior in old disciples. More deadness to the world, the vanity of which they have had more opportunities to see; more meekness of wisdom; more disposition to make sacrifices for the sake of peace; more maturity of judgment in divine things; more confidence in God; more richness of experience.

He also tells us *why* he shall flourish. "They shall be fat and flourishing; to shew that the Lord is upright." We might rather have supposed that it was necessary to shew that *they* were upright. But by the grace of God they are what they are—not they, but the grace of God which is in them. From *him* is their fruit found. Their preservation and fertility, therefore, are to the praise and glory of God; and as what he does for them he had *engaged* to do, it displays his truth as well as his mercy, and proves that he is upright.—*William Jay.*

Verse 12.—"*The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree.*"

1. *The palm tree grows in the desert.* Earth is a desert to the Christian; true believers are ever refreshed in it as a palm is in the Arabian desert. So *Lot* amid Sodom's wickedness, and *Enoch* who walked with God amongst the antediluvians.

2. *The palm tree grows from the sand, but the sand is not its food;* water from below feeds its tap roots, though the heavens above be brass. Some Christians grow, not as the lily, Hos. xiv. 5, by green pastures, or the willow by water-courses, Isai, xliv. 4, but as the palm of the desert; so *Joseph* among the Cat-worshippers of Egypt, *Daniel* in voluptuous Babylon. Faith's penetrating root reaches the fountains of living waters.

3. *The palm tree is beautiful,* with its tall and verdant canopy, and the silvery flashes of its waving plumes; so the Christian virtues are not like the creeper or bramble, tending downwards, their palm branches shoot upwards, and seek the things above where Christ dwells, Col. iii. 1: some trees are crooked and gnarled, but the Christian is a tall palm as a son of the light, Matt. iii. 12; Phil. ii. 15. The Jews were called a crooked generation, Deut. xxxii. 5, and Satan a crooked serpent, Isai. xxvii., but the Christian is upright like the palm. Its beautiful, unfading leaves make it an emblem of victory; it was twisted into verdant booths at the feast of Tabernacles; and the multitude, when escorting Christ to his coronation in Jerusalem, spread leaves on the way, Matt. xxi. 8; so victors in heaven are represented as having palms in their hands, Rev. vii. 9. No dust adheres to the leaf as it does with the *battree;* the Christian is in the world, not of it; the dust of earth's desert adheres not to his palm leaf. The leaf of the palm is the same—it does not fall in winter, and even in the summer it has no holiday-clothing, it is an evergreen; the palm trees' rustling is the desert orison.

4. *The palm tree is very useful.* The Hindus reckon it has 360 uses. Its shadow shelters, its fruit refreshes the weary traveller, it points out the place

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of water, such was *Barnabas*, a son of consolation, Acts iv. 36; such Lydia, Dorcas, and others, who on the King's highway showed the way to heaven, as Philip did to the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts, ix. 34. Jericho was called the City of Palms, Deut. xxxiv. 3.

5. *The palm tree produces even to old age.* The best dates ars produced when the tree is from thirty to one hundred years old; 300lbs. of dates are annually yielded: so the Christian grows happier and more useful as he becomes older. Knowing his own faults more, he is more mellow to others: he is like the sun setting, beautiful, mild, and large, looking like Elim, where the wearied Jews found twelve wells and seventy palm trees.—*J. Long, in "Scripture Truth in Oriental Dress,"* 1871.

Verse 12.—"*Palm-trees.*" The open country moreover wears a sad aspect now: the soil is rent and dissolves into dust at every breath of wind; the green of the meadows is almost entirely gone,—the *palm-tree* alone preserves in the drought and heat its verdant root of leaves.—*Gotthelf H. von Schubert*, 1780—1860.

Verse 12.—"*A cedar in Lebanon.*" Laying aside entirely any enquiry as to the palm-tree, and laying aside the difficulty contained in the 13th verse, I have only to compare this description of the cedar in Lebanon with the accounts of those who have visited them in modern days. Without believing (as the Maronites or Christian inhabitants of the mountains do), that the seven very ancient cedars which yet remain in the neighbourhood of the village of Eden in Lebanon are the remains of the identical forest which furnished Solomon with timber for the Temple, full three thousand years ago, they can yet be proved to be of very great antiquity. These very cedars were visited by Belonius in 1550, nearly three hundred years ago, who found them twenty-eight in number. Rawolf, in 1575, makes them twenty-four. Dandini, in 1600, and Thevenot about fifty years after, make them twenty-three. Maundrell, in 1696, found them reduced to sixteen. Pococke, in 1738, found fifteen standing, and a sixteenth recently blown down, or (may we not conjecture?) shivered by the voice of God. In 1810, Burckhardt counted eleven or twelve; and Dr. Richardson, in 1818, states them to be no more than seven. There cannot be a doubt, then, that thess cedars which were esteemed ancient nearly three hundred years ago, must be of a very great antiquity; and yet they are described by the last of these travellers as "large, and tall, and beautiful, the most picturesque productions of the vegetable world that we had seen." The oldest are large and massy, rearing their heads to an enormous height, and spreading their branches afar. Pococke also remarks, that "the young cedars are not easily known from pines. I observed, they bear a *greater quantity* of fruit than the large ones." This shows that the old ones still bear fruit, though not so abundantly as the young cedars, which, according to Richardson, are very productive, and cast many seeds annually. How appropriate, then, and full of meaning, is the imagery of the Psalmist: "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing."—*R. M. M'Cheyne.*

Verses 12—15.—The life and greenness of the branches in an honour to the root by which they live. Spiritual greenness and fruitfulness is in a believer an honour to Jesus Christ who is his life. The fulness of Christ is manifested by the fruitfulness of a Christian.—*Ralph Robinson.*

Verse 13.—"*Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God,*" are not distinctive of some from others, as though some only of the flourishing righteous were so planted; but they are descriptive of them all, with an addition of the way and means whereby they are caused so to grow and flourish. And this is their implantation in the house of the Lord,—that is, in the church, which is the seat of all the means of spiritual life, both as unto growth and flourishing, which God is pleased to grant unto believers. To be planted in the house of the Lord, is to be fixed and

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rooted in the grace communicated by the ordinances of divine worship. Unless we are planted in the house of the Lord, we cannot flourish in his courts. See Ps. i. 3. Unless we are partakers of the grace administered in the ordinances, we cannot flourish in a fruitful profession.—*John Owen.*

Verse 13.—"*Those that be planted in the house of the Lord,*" etc. Saints are planted in the house of God; they have a kind of rooting there: but though the tabernacle be a good rooting-place, yet we cannot root firmly there, unless we are rooted in Jesus Christ. To root in tabernacle work, or in the bare use of ordinances, as if that would carry it, and commend us to God, when there is no heart work, when there is no looking to the power of godliness, and to communion with Christ, what is this but building upon the sand? Many come often to the tabernacle, who are mere strangers to Christ; they use pure ordinances, but are themselves impure. These may have a great name in the tabernacle for a while, but God blots their names, and roots their hopes out of the tabernacle; yea, he puts them from the horns of the altar, or slays them there, as Solomon gave commandment concerning Joab.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 13.—"*In the house of the Lord.*" As if in a most select viridarium, or as if in a park, abounding in trees dedicated to God. And as in v. 12 he had made mention of Lebanon, where the cedars attain their highest perfection, so now he tacitly opposes to Lebanon the *house of God*, or church, wherein we bloom, grow, and bring forth fruit pleasing to God.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 14.—"*They shall still bring forth fruit in old age.*" The point on which the Psalmist in this passage fixes, as he contemplates the blessedness of God's own children, is the beauty and happiness of their old age. The court or open area in the centre of an eastern dwelling, and especially the court of any great and stately dwelling, was often adorned with a tree, or sometimes with more than one, for beauty, for shade, and, as it might be, for fruit. There sometimes the palm tree, planted by the cool fountain, shot up its tall trunk toward the sky, and waved its green top, far above the roof, in the sun-light and the breeze. There sometimes the olive, transplanted from the rocky hill-side, may have flourished under the protection and culture of the household, and may have rewarded their care with the rich abundance of its nutritious berries. With such images in his mind, the Psalmist, having spoken of the brief prosperity of the wicked, and having compared it with the springing and flourishing of the grass, which grows to its little height only to be immediately cut down, naturally and beautifully compares the righteous, not with the deciduous herbage, but with the hardy tree that lives on through the summer's drought and the winter's storms, and from season to season still renews its growth. These trees of righteousness, as the poet conceives of them, are "planted in the house of the Lord;" they stand fair and "flowering in the courts of our God"—even "in old age they bring forth fruit"—they are "full of sap and flourishing"—they are living memorials "to show that the Lord is faithful," and that those who trust in him shall never be confounded.—*Leonard Bacon*, 1845.

Verse 14.—There be three things which constitute a spiritual state, or belong to the life of God. 1. That believers be fat; that is, by the heavenly juice, sap, or fatness of the true olive, of Christ himself, as Rom. xi. 17. This is the principle of spiritual life and grace derived from him. When this abounds in them, so as to give them strength and vigour in the exercise of grace, to keep them from decays and withering, they are said to be fat; which, in the Scripture phrase, is strong and healthy. 2. That they flourish in the greenness (as the word is) and verdure of profession; for vigorous grace will produce a flourishing profession. 3. That they still bring forth fruit in all duties of holy obedience. All these are promised unto them even in old age.

Even trees, when they grow old (the palm and the cedar), are apt to lose a part of their juice and verdure: and men in old age are subject unto all sorts of decays, both outward and inward. It is a rare thing to see a man in old age

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naturally vigorous, healthy, and strong; and would it were not more rare to see any spiritually so at the same season! But this is here promised unto believers as an especial grace and privilege, beyond what can be represented in the growth or fruit-bearing of plants and trees. The grace intended is, that when believers are under all sorts of bodily and natural decays, and, it may be, have been overtaken with spiritual decays also, there is provision made in the covenant to render them fat, flourishing, and fruitful,—vigorous in the power of internal grace, and flourishing in the expression of it in all duties of obedience; which is that which we now inquire after. Blessed be God for this good word of his grace, that he hath given us such encouragement against all the decays and temptations of old age which we have to conflict withal!

And the Psalmist, in the next words, declares the greatness of the privilege: "*To shew that the Lord is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.*" Consider the oppositions that lie against the flourishing of believers in old age, the difficulties of it, the temptations that must be conquered, the actings of the mind above its natural abilities which are decayed, the weariness that is apt to befall us in a long spiritual conflict, the cries of the flesh to be spared, and we shall see it to be an evidence of the faithfulness, power, and righteousness of God in covenant; nothing else could produce this mighty effect. So the prophet, treating of the same promise, Hosea xiv. 4—8, closeth his discourse with that blessed remark, ver. 9, "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them." Spiritual wisdom will make us to see that the faithfulness and power of God are exerted in this work of preserving believers flourishing and fruitful unto the end.—*John Owen.*

Verse 14.—Constancy is an ingredient in the obedience Christ requires. His trees bring forth fruit in old age. Age makes other things decay, but makes a Christian flourish. Some are like hot horses, mettlesome at the beginning of a journey, and tired a long time before they come to their journey's end. A good disciple, as he would not have from God a temporary happiness, so he would not give to God a temporary obedience; as he would have his glory last as long as God lives, so he would have his obedience last as long as he lives. Judas had a fair beginning, but destroyed all in the end by betraying his Master.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 14.—"*Flourishing.*" Here is not only mention of growing but of *flourishing*, and here's flourishing three times mentioned, and 'tis growing and flourishing not only like a tree, but like a "*palm tree,*" (which flourisheth under oppression), and like a "*cedar*" (not growing in ordinary places, but) "in *Lebanon*," where were the goodliest cedars. Nor doth the Spirit promise here a flourishing in boughs and leaves only (as some trees do, and do no more), but in fruit; and this not only fruit for once in a year, or one year, but they "*still bring forth fruit,*" and that not only in the years of their youth, or beginnings in grace, but "*in old age,*" and that not only in the entrance of that state which is called *old age*, threescore years, but that which the Scripture calls the perfection of *old age*, threescore years and ten, as the learned Hebrews observe upon the word used in the psalm. What a *divine climax* doth the Spirit of God make in this Scripture, to show that the godly man as to his state, is so far from declining, that he is still climbing higher and higher.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 15.—"*He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.*" Implying that God can no more be moved or removed from doing righteously, than a rock can be removed out of its place.—*Joseph Caryl.*

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HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—I. It is a good thing to have cause for gratitude. Every one has this. II. It is a good thing to have the principle of gratitude. This is the gift of God. III. It is a good thing to give expression to gratitude. This may excite gratitude in others.—*G. R.*

Verses 1—3.—The blessedness of praise, verse 1. The theme of praise, verse 2. The ingenuity of praise, verse 3—inanimate nature enlisted in the holy work. —*C. A. Davis.*

Verse 2.—I. Our praises of God should be *intelligent*, declaring his varied attributes. II. *Seasonable*, declaring each attribute in appropriate time. III. *Continual*, every night, and every day.

Verse 3.—I. All the powers of the soul shall be praise. "Upon an instrument of ten strings," all the chords of the mind, affections, will, etc. II. All the utterances of the lips should be praise. III. All the actions of the life should be praise.

Verse 3.—In our praise of God there should be, I. *Preparation*—for instruments should be tuned. II. *Breadth of thought*—"upon an instrument of ten strings." III. *Absorption of the whole nature*—"ten strings." IV. *Variety*—psaltery, harp, etc. V. *Deep reverence*—"solemn sound."

Verse 4 (*first sentence*).—I. My state—"glad." II. How I arrived at it—"thou hast made me glad." III. What is the ground of it?—"through thy work." IV. What, then, shall I do?—ascribe it all to God, and bless him for it.

Verse 4.—I. The divinest gladness—of God's creation, having God's work for its argument. II. The divinest triumph—caused by the varied works of God in creation, providence, redemption, &c. The first is for our own hearts, the second is for the convincing of those around us.

Verse 5.—The unscalable mountains and the fathomless sea: or the divine works and the divine thoughts (God-revealed and hidden) equally beyond human apprehension.—*C. A. Davis.*

Verse 7.—Great prosperity the frequent forerunner of destruction to wicked men, for it leads them to provoke divine wrath—I. By hardness of heart, as Pharaoh. II. By pride, as Nebuchadnezzar. III. By haughty hatred of the saints, as Haman. IV. By carnal security, as the rich fool. V. By self-exaltation, as Herod.

Verses 7—10.—Contrasts. Between the wicked and God, verses 7, 8. Between God's enemies and his friends, verses 9, 10.—*C. A. Davis.*

Verses 7, 12—14.—The wicked and the righteous pourtrayed—*C. A. Davis.*

Verse 10 (*last clause*).—Christian illumination, consecration, gladness, and graces, are all of them the anointing of the Spirit.—*William Garrett Lewis*, 1872.

Verse 10 (*last clause*).—The subject of David's confidence was—I. Very comprehensive, including renewed strength, fresh tokens of favour, confirmation in office, qualification for it, and new joys. II. Well grounded, since it rested in God, and his promises. III. Calming all fears. IV. Exciting hopes. V. Causing pity for those who have no such confidence.

Verse 12.—I. The righteous flourish in all places. Palm in the valley, cedar on the mountain. II. In all seasons. Both trees are evergreen. III. Under all circumstances. Palm in drought, cedar in storm and frost.—*G. R.*

Verses 14—16.—I. Regeneration—"planted." II. Growth in grace—"flourish." III. Usefulness—"fruit." IV. Perseverance—"old age." V. The reason of it all—"to shew that the Lord," etc.

Verses 15, 16.—The reason and the pledge of final perseverance.—*C. A. Davis.*

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PSALM XCIII.

This brief Psalm is without title or name of author, but its subject is obvious enough, being stated in the very first line. It is the Psalm of Omnipotent Sovereignty: *Jehovah, despite all opposition, reigns supreme. Possibly at the time this sacred ode was written, the nation was in danger from its enemies, and the hopes of the people of God were encouraged by remembering that the Lord was still King. What sweeter and surer consolation could they desire?*

EXPOSITION.

THE LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, *wherewith* he hath girded himself: the world also is established, that it cannot be moved.

2 Thy throne *is* established of old: thou *art* from everlasting.

3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves.

4 The LORD on high *is* mightier than the noise of many waters, *yea, than* the mighty waves of the sea.

5 Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.

1. "*The* LORD *reigneth,*" or Jehovah reigns. Whatever opposition may arise, his throne is unmoved; he has reigned, does reign, and will reign for ever and ever. Whatever turmoil and rebellion there may be beneath the clouds, the eternal King sits above all in supreme serenity; and everywhere he is really Master, let his foes rage as they may. All things are ordered according to his eternal purposes, and his will is done. In the verse before us it would seem as if the Lord had for a while appeared to vacate the throne, but on a sudden he puts on his regal apparel and ascends his lofty seat, while his happy people proclaim him with new joy, shouting "The Lord reigneth." What can give greater joy to a loyal subject than a sight of the king in his beauty? Let us repeat the proclamation, "the Lord reigneth," whispering it in the ears of the desponding, and publishing it in the face of the foe. "*He is clothed with majesty.*" Not with emblems of majesty, but with majesty itself: everything which surrounds him is majestic. His is not the semblance but the reality of sovereignty. In nature, providence, and salvation the Lord is infinite in majesty. Happy are the people among whom the Lord appears in all the glory of his grace, conquering their enemies, and subduing all things unto himself; then indeed is he seen to be clothed with majesty.

"*The* LORD *is clothed with strength.*" His garments of glory are not his only array, he wears strength also as his girdle. He is always strong, but sometimes he displays his power in a special manner, and may therefore be said to be clothed with it; just as he is always majestic essentially, but yet there are seasons when he reveals his glory, and so wears his majesty, or shows himself in it. May the Lord appear in his church, in our day, in manifest majesty and might, saving sinners, slaying errors, and honouring his own name. O for a day of the Son of man, in which the King Immortal and Almighty shall stand upon his glorious high throne, to be feared in the great congregation, and admired by all them that believe. "*Wherewith he hath girded himself.*" As men gird up their loins for running or working, so the Lord appears in the eyes of his people to be preparing for action, girt with his omnipotence. Strength always dwells in the Lord Jehovah, but he hides his power full often, until, in answer to his children's cries, he puts on strength, assumes the throne, and defends his own. It should be a constant theme for

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prayer, that in our day the reign of the Lord may be conspicuous, and his power displayed in his church and on her behalf. "Thy kingdom come" should be our daily prayer: that the Lord Jesus does actually reign should be our daily praise.

"*The world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved.*" Because Jehovah reigns terrestrial things for a while are stable. We could not be sure of anything if we were not sure that he has dominion. When he withdraws his manifest presence from among men all things are out of order; blasphemers rave, persecutors rage, the profane grow bold, and the licentious increase in wantonness; but when the divine power and glory are again manifested order is restored, and the poor distracted world is at peace again. Society would be the football of the basest of mankind if God did not establish it, and even the globe itself would fly through space, like thistle-down across the common, if the Lord did not hold it in its appointed orbit. That there is any stability, either in the world or in the church, is the Lord's doings, and he is to be adored for it. Atheism is the mother of anarchy; the reigning power of God exhibited in true religion is the only security for the human commonwealth. A belief in God is the foundation and corner-stone of a well-ordered state.

2. "*Thy throne is established of old.*" Though thou mayest just now appear in more conspicuous sovereignty, yet thine is no upstart sovereignty: in the most ancient times thy dominion was secure, yea, before time was thy throne was set up. We often hear of ancient dynasties, but what are they when compared with the Lord? Are they not as the bubble on the breaker, born an instant ago and gone as soon as seen? "*Thou art from everlasting.*" The Lord himself is eternal. Let the believer rejoice that the government under which he dwells has an immortal ruler at its head, has existed from all eternity and will flourish when all created things shall have for ever passed away. Vain are the rebellions of mortals, the kingdom of God is not shaken.

3. "*The floods have lifted up, O* LORD." Men have raged like angry waves of the sea, but vain has been their tumult. Observe that the psalmist turns to the Lord when he sees the billows foam, and hears the breakers roar: he does not waste his breath by talking to the waves, or to violent men; but like Hezekiah he spreads the blasphemies of the wicked before the Lord. "*The floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves.*" These repetitions are needed for the sake both of the poetry and the music, but they also suggest the frequency and the violence of wicked assaults upon the government of God, and the repeated defeats which they sustain. Sometimes men are furious in words—they lift up their voice, and at other times they rise to acts of violence—they lift up their waves; but the Lord has control over them in either case. The ungodly are all foam and fury, noise and bluster, during their little hour, and then the tide turns or the storm is hushed, and we hear no more of them; while the kingdom of the Eternal abides in the grandeur of its power.

4. "*The* LORD *on high is mightier than the noise of many waters.*" The utmost of their power is to him but a sound and he can readily master it, therefore he calls it a noise by way of contempt. When men combine to overthrow the kingdom of Jesus, plot secretly, and by-an-by rage openly, the Lord thinks no more of it than of so much noise upon the sea-beach. Jehovah, the self-existent and omnipotent, cares not for the opposition of dying men, however many or mighty they may be.

"Loud the stormy billows spoke,
  Loud the billows raised their cry;
Fierce the stormy billows broke,
  Sounding to the echoing sky.
Strong the breakers tossing high,
  Stronger is Jehovah's might.
True thy words; and sanctity
  Well becomes thy temple bright."

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"*Yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.*" When the storm raises Atlantic billows, and drives them on with terrific force, the Lord is still able to restrain them, and so also when impious men are haughty and full of rage the Lord is able to subdue them and overrule their malice. Kings or mobs, emperors or savages, all are in the Lord's hands, and he can forbid their touching a hair of the heads of his saints.

5. "*Thy testimonies are very sure.*" As in providence the throne of God is fixed beyond all risk, so in revelation his truth is beyond all question. Other teachings are uncertain, but the revelations of heaven are infallible. As the rocks remain unmoved amid the tumult of the sea, so does divine truth resist all the currents of man's opinion and the storms of human controversy; they are not only sure, but *very sure.* Glory be to God, we have not been deluded by a cunningly-devised fable: our faith is grounded upon the eternal truth of the Most High. "*Holiness becometh thine house, O* LORD, *for ever.*" Truth changes not in its doctrines, which are very sure, nor holiness in its precepts, which are incorruptible. The teaching and the character of God are both unaltered. God has not admitted evil to dwell with him, he will not tolerate it in his house, he is eternally its enemy, and is for ever the sworn friend of holiness. The church must remain unchanged, and for ever be holiness unto the Lord; yea, her King will preserve her undefiled by the intruder's foot. Sacred unto the Lord is the church of Jesus Christ, and so shall she be kept evermore. "Jehovah reigns," is the first word and the main doctrine of the psalm, and holiness is the final result; a due esteem for the great King will lead us to adopt a behaviour becoming his royal presence. Divine sovereignty both confirms the promises as sure testimonies, and enforces the precepts as seemly and becoming in the presence of so great a Lord.

The whole psalm is most impressive, and is calculated to comfort the distressed, confirm the timorous, and assist the devout. O thou who art so great and gracious a King, reign over us for ever! We do not desire to question or restrain thy power, such is thy character that we rejoice to see thee exercise the rights of an absolute monarch. All power is in thine hands, and we rejoice to have it so. Hosanna! Hosanna!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This is one of those magnificent psalms which describe Jehovah's reign. Even Jewish interpreters say of them: "these all treat of the things which will take place in the times of Messiah." Throughout it reads like a commentary and application of the great fundamental truth, "Jehovah reigneth." Already he hath laid the foundations of his kingdom in his Church, and anon shall he in his faithfulness and power establish it. Those elements which have hitherto resisted shall not be allowed to continue. Right royally he manifests himself. "*He is clothed with majesty; clothed is Jehovah, might hath he girt about him.*" The present state of things is connected with Christ's humiliation. But when he puts on his royal mantle of majesty, and girds about him the sword of his might: "*thus the world shall be established; it cannot be moved.*" And yet, though seemingly the enemy has long prevailed, "*Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting.*" The establishment of his throne is the ground and the pledge of the establishment of the world and of his kingdom. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." In view of all this the Church stands a wondering spectator, first struck with awe, and then filled with adoring gratitude. "*The floods have lifted up, O Jehovah, they have lifted up their roaring; the floods are lifting up their dashing noise.* The latter term refers to the sound of the waves *as they break*, and in connexion with it the change of tense is very

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marked. The enemies of God and his kingdom have risen like the floods or waves of the sea, lashed by the storm; with roaring noise have they advanced; but as they near the vessel which bears the King, their noise is that of waves dashing into foam. Their utmost nearness is—to their destruction; their utmost noise is—in breaking. And even now, and in the height of the storm also, far overtopping not only all danger, but even its threatening noise, is Jehovah. "*Jehovah on high*" (even there) "*is mightier than the roaring of many waters and mighty, than the breaking waves of the sea*" (the word here rendered "*breaking waves*" being literally a *derivative* from the verb to break). What a picture this of our safety; what an epitome of the history of God's government and of his church! Thus the calming of the storm on the lake of Galilee was not only a parabolic representation of the history of the Kingdom of God, but also typical of the final consummation of all things; a summary of the past, a prophecy of the future, a type of the end. And what applies to the Church as a whole, holds equally true of individual believers. Let us ever remember that the noise is that of the *breaking* wave. Our greatest dangers are only breaking waves; waves which break at his feet. The same expression is also sometimes applied to the waves of God's wrath or judgments threatening to engulf the believer, as in Ps. xlii. 7; lxxxviii. 7. These also, blessed be his name, are only breaking waves. Meanwhile, while waiting for the manifestation of his majesty and might, "we have the more sure word of prophecy." "*Thy testimonies are very sure*" (very reliable, literally very *Amen*-ed): and, so far as we are concerned, our faith and patience are tried and proved: "*Holiness becometh thine house, O* LORD, *for ever.*"

Thus we have here the history of the Church of God deduced from the text, "*Jehovah reigneth.*" These words are to us as "a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts." So long as they are left us, all that threatens us from without is only like the noise of the breaking wave. The unspeakable comfort conveyed in this assurance is ever tested in the experience of God's people. There is no truth more precious to the heart of the Christian than that "*the* LORD *reigneth.*" The conviction of this must carry us far above all cares and fears. A personal God, a living God, a reigning God—alike in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth—and this God the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,—such are the steps by which we reach a height, where, far removed from the turmoil of men, we gain a comprehensive and clear view of earth and its concerns. I would not exchange the assurance which these two words, "*Jehovah reigneth,*" convey, for all the wisdom, combined with all the power, of this world. Received into my heart, they are the solution of every difficulty, the end of all perplexity. It seems to me as if, after puzzling over the cross-writing and hieroglyphics of men, I turned a fresh leaf, on the top of which stood these words, as the text to be preached out in all history, whether of the individual, the family, or the nation, the Church or the world. It seems as if, after revolving sorrowfully and helplessly all the difficulties and wants which distress my heart, I were at once rising above those floating clouds into clear atmosphere: as if all at once I were unburdened; as if I had reached a haven of rest; as if I had found a firm foundation, an ultimate principle. After all, in every real trial there is but this one final and full comfort. What matters the opinion of men,—who may be for and who against me; who may be with me, or who may leave me. Who would speak of prospects or probabilities, of the support to be derived from wealth or power, or of the defections of friends on whose sympathy and help we had counted? "*Jehovah reigneth!*" There is light here across my every path, provided I follow Christ, walking in the narrow way. Only let me be sure that, in any and every respect, I am on the Lord's side and in the Lord's way, and I ask no more. My God has all the silver and all the gold in his own hand. He holdeth the hearts of all men at his disposal; he directeth all events, from the least to the greatest. If I want power with God or with men,

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let me pray; for, Jehovah reigneth. Nor let me think that special interpositions are either impossible or rare. They are constant. The course of God's providence is one of constant interposition; for "all things work together for good to them that love God." Only these interpositions are not violent, and therefore not noticed by the superficial observer; they are the interpositions of all-wise and almighty God, not of poor, weak man; they are the *interpositions*, not *interferences;* they are the working of the machinery by the Master-mind which designed, and the Master-hand which framed it. They are not the stoppage, but the working of the machinery, whereby its real object is wrought out.

Lastly, let me note in the Psalm these three things:

In *creation and nature:* pre-established law *along with* continuous, personal government,—not as opposed to, but as pre-supposing one another (vers. 1, 2). In *Providence:* "The LORD on *high* is mightier than the noise of many waters"—which would otherwise strike terror, even as their swelling would threaten constant danger. And in *grace:* "His testimonies are *very* sure." I can rest on them. Not one tittle or iota shall fall to the ground. Wherever I have a word of promise, I can safely plant my steps. The conclusion and inference from the whole matter is that "*holiness*"—not fear nor man-serving, but separation unto the Lord—"*becometh,*" or is the right, wise, and proper attitude of his house and people.—*Alfred Edersheim, in "The Golden Diary of Heart Converse with Jesus in the Book of Psalms,"* 1866.

Whole Psalm.—It is mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud that it was the custom of the Jews to sing this psalm on the sixth day of the week, to which it is well suited as celebrating the re-establishing and founding again of the world in the new creation (ver. 1): which is confirmed by a title given to it in the Septuagint—"*On the day before the Sabbath, when the earth was founded: A Psalm of thanksgiving to* (or *for*) *David*"—adopted by the Vulgate and the Oriental Version in general. And thus is this Psalm identified in subject with the preceding: as also Hengstenberg observes—"The reference, which it is impossible not to notice, in which 'The Lord on high is mightier,' here (ver. 4) stands to 'But Thou, Lord, art most high for evermore' (Ps. xcii. 8) —the kernel and middle point of the whole psalm—has already led commentators to notice a near connexion between these two psalms . . . . which is decidedly favoured by the contents; both psalms minister consolation to the Church, exposed to danger by the might of the world." He might have added —in the promise they give of "the *rest* [the Sabbatism] that remains to the people of God," when both shall be fulfilled.—*W. De Burgh.*

Verse 1.—"*The* LORD *reigneth.*" It is a kind of proclamation in which God's people are invited to declare before men and angels that the Lord is King, He and He only. It is the response of the Church to the preaching of the gospel—so rapturously hailed in Isaiah—the preaching of the messenger "that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" —*William Binnie.*

Verse 1.—"*The* LORD." He describes God by the name *Jehovah*, partly, to lead us to think of the God of Israel, accustomed by this name to be distinguished from the gods of the nations; partly, to call to mind the virtues of veracity, grace and justice, comprehended by this name, and now clearly made known. . . . When he says, Jehovah *reigns*, without adding any restriction, or mentioning any people, it would seem that the *Kingdom of Jehovah* is to be taken absolutely and generally, with equal reference to the government of *the world* and *the church.* In the *former* sense Jehovah may be said *to reign*, not as if He then at last begun to reign, but because He proved himself to be the King of the world in an extraordinary way, by giving public and manifest signs; by which it was clearly established that Jehovah is the true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord and Ruler of the whole

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universe, and a just and equitable judge, in inflicting notable judgments upon sinners, in casting down the idols, and vindicating the cause of true religion and virtue. This meaning I regard as contained in the general proposition: yet directly in its primary signification I understand the Kingdom of God in his Church, partly, because God is here said to vindicate the cause of religion, and of his people; partly, he is said, in Ps. xcix. to show himself *exalted in Zion*, and *there to undertake the Kingdom*, Is. xxiv. 23, and often elsewhere in the Prophetic word; and lastly, because *Jehovah*, the King of his people, he himself *who reigns*, is set forth as the *ruler* of the universe. He is the King therefore of his people, He has his *Kingdom* in their midst, but to Him all things in heaven and earth are subject as well.

In this latter sense, therefore, the phrase, *Jehovah has reigned*, will stand for, *He has undertaken the Kingdom*, *He is become King*, as it is often used in the histories of the Kings of Judah and Israel; so also in Is. xxiii. 23, and elsewhere. . . . When He is said to *have taken* the Kingdom in the midst of his people, it must not be understood absolutely, but in a restricted sense, in reference partly to the *manner* and form of rule, being more or less *theocratic;* partly, to the displays of the Divine Majesty, being more or less conspicuous; and partly, to the servile or afflicted state of his people, as extending from the Babylonish exile up to the time of the Maccabees. In which times God is said *to have taken the Kingdom*, in many other prophecies beside this, Is. xxiv., Obad. ult. Mic. iv. 8, &c.—*Venema.*

Verse 1.—"*The* LORD *reigneth.*" These are the initial words of Pss. xcvii. and xcix. also. Perhaps a threefold manner of reigning is suggested, namely, over things subjected to God by a natural necessity, over those that resist his will and as far as in them lies withdraw themselves from his dominion, and over those who spontaneously and freely obey. For in this place the Kingdom is declared to be co-extensive with the foundation of the world: in Ps. xcvii. it is hinted at for the exultation of the earth, and for the gladness of the isles; in Ps. cxix. God is said to reign, although the people are angry, and the earth is filled with commotion.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 1.—"*The* LORD *reigneth.*" Having considered in all quarters the worldly rule of idols, and earthly deities or kings, the Psalmist at last bursts forth into the words which attribute supreme government to none other, but to Jehovah the true God. Let it be granted that the monarchs of Assyria, the kings of Egypt, and the masters of other nations, extend their empire far and wide; let it be allowed that royal majesty is ascribed to the idols by their worshippers; yet all these are as nothing to the kingdom and majesty of Jehovah.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 1.—"*The* LORD *reigneth,*" *i.e.*, the Lord has become King (Ps. xcvi. 10; xcvii. 1; xcix. 1). The formula proclaimed at *the accession* of earthly sovereigns (2 Sam. xv. 10; 1 Kings i. 11, 13; *margin*, 2 Kings ix. 13, "Jehu *reigneth*"). The reference is not to the *ordinary and constant* government of God, but to his *assuming* a *new* and glorious kingdom. The arrogant proclamation of the world-power was virtually "the Assyrian reigneth"; the overthrow of him was God's counter-proclamation: "The Lord (Jehovah) reigneth." The antitypical sense is, the world-powers under Antichrist, energized by Satan (Rev. xvi. 14; xvii. 12—14, 17), shall make one last desperate stroke, seemingly for the moment successful, for the dominion of the earth, in defiance of the Lord, (2 Thess. ii.) But Christ will take his great power and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords, having overthrown utterly the antichristian enemy. (Isa. xxiv. 23; Obad. 21; Zech. xiv. 9; Rev. xi., 15, 17; xix. 6.)—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 1.—"*The* LORD *reigneth.*" The very first words of this psalm seem to indicate a morning of calm repose after a night of storm, a day of stillness after the tumult of battle. "The LORD reigneth." "He hath put all enemies under his feet."—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 1.—"*The world also is established.*" The word *world* is properly

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taken for the habitable globe, and metonymically for the inhabitants of the earth. This is clear from Ps. xxiv. 1; l. 2; lxxxix. 12; ix. 9; xcvi. 1, 3; xcviii. 9. In this passage the former signification seems to obtain, because this majestic King has fortified no tower or palace strongly, but the whole *world*, by the word of his power, that therein there might be a constant habitation for the men who worship Him, even to the destined day of the last judgment.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 2.—"*Thy throne is established.*" The invariable perpetuity of the divine kingdom is celebrated in these words. No vicissitudes are apprehended there, as in earthly monarchies and kingdoms, where thrones are not infrequently shaken, either on account of the death of their kings or principal men, or by reason of the unfaithfulness of subjects or ministers, or because of the schemes or attacks of enemies; none of which can disturb the divine rule.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 2.—"*Thy throne is established of old.*" Lest any one should suspect that the royal dignity depicted and demonstrated in the previous verse by the creation of the world, which was the effect of kingly power and majesty, was a new thing or came into existence yesterday or the day before, or that God had recently obtained the office of ruling and governing, or that by long use and experience he had acquired skill, or held a somewhat foreign throne as other kings are wont, he says that this dignity is as ancient as creation itself, so that the throne of this kingdom was founded at the very time when the foundations of the earth were laid; and as the earth was established by him as his *footstool*, so the *heaven was his throne*, (Isa. lxvi. 1), which endures for ever. Especially does he teach that from eternity, before the formation of the world, God always remained the same in himself, not needing creation or any creature, thereby to obtain any new perfection.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 2.—"*Of old.*" The Italian, *from all eternity:* Hebrew, *from then;* an Hebrew phrase to signify an eternity without any beginning, Prov. viii. 22; as eternity without end is signified by another term, which is as much as, *until then.*—*Diodati.*

Verse 3.—"*The floods have lifted up,*" etc. Advisedly in this place does he make mention of floods, in order better to depict the effects of war. For when rivers are raised and swollen with inundations, they burst the restraining banks, and sweep far and wide over the neighboring plains, carrying everything in their course. Such is the manner of war; when armies are despatched into countries, they lay waste and fill all places with slaughter. Whence Virgil employs this simile (Æneid II.) in describing the violence of the Grecian army breaking into the citadel of Priam,—[rendered by Dryden thus]—

> "In rush the Greeks, and all the apartments fill;
> Those few defendants whom they find, they kill.
> Not with so fierce a rage the foaming flood
> Roars, when he finds his rapid course withstood;
> Bears down the dams with unresisted sway,
> And sweeps the cattle and the cots away. —*Mollerus.*

Verse 3.—"*Their waves.*" The word דֹּכִי signifies a wave; because the water being dashed against a rock, or the shore, or another wave, is broken into spray. For the central idea of the word is breaking. And this aptly serves to picture the issue of those commotions and wars which are undertaken for the overthrow of empires and the church. For as mighty waves fill the beholders with horror, so great and powerful armies fill all things with fear and terror. But as the waves striking, in a moment are broken, and disappear, so the mighty power of kings and princes is often dissolved at one glance of God. The Church dwells in this life, as a rock in the waves, beaten by the waves of every tempest; but yet remains immutable, because the Son of God confirms and sustains her.—*Mollerus.*

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Verse 4.—"*The* LORD *on high.*" "*On high*" is not to be regarded in the sense of locality, as none compete with God in that, but in reference to dominion and glory.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 4.—"*The* LORD *on high is mightier,*" etc. Therefore consider not so much thy distress, as thy Deliverer; and when men's malicious combination may affright thee, let Divine association support thee. The danger may exceed thy resistance, but not God's assistance; the enemies' power may surpass thy strength, their subtlety outwit thy prudence, but neither can excel the wisdom and might of God that is with thee. O learn therefore to try God in his strength, to trust him in difficulties; and when the merciless waves are ready to swallow thee; commit thyself to his custody. The mariner in straits looks up to heaven, do thou so; and remember that when the waters of affliction are never so high, yet "*the Lord on high is mightier than they.*"—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy testimonies,*" *i.e.*, thy words; either, 1. Thy precepts, which are commonly called God's *testimonies.* And so having spoken of God's kingdom, he now showeth that the laws of that kingdom are just, and true, and holy; which is a singular commendation of it. Or, 2. Thy promises, as may be gathered from the following words, "*are sure,*" or *true*, or *faithful;* which attribute properly belongs, and everywhere in Scripture is ascribed, to promises rather than to precepts. And the promises no less than the precepts are God's *testimonies*, or the witnesses or declarations of his mind and will to mankind. And he seems here to speak of those great and precious promises concerning the erection and establishment of his kingdom in the world by the Messias; which, saith he, are infallibly true, and shall certainly be accomplished in thy time.—*Matthew Pool.*

Verse 5.—"*Holiness becometh thine house, O* LORD." Singular things are expected of all that draw nigh to God in any duty, but especially in the office of the ministry; they must sanctify themselves with a singular care above that of the rest of the people. Those that stand in the presence of princes must be exact in their carriage. God appointed both the weights and measures of the sanctuary to be twice as large as those of the commonwealth, to shew that he expects much more of those that serve him there, than he doth of others. Holiness becomes every house well, but best God's; and every man, but most of all the minister, who is the mirror in which the people behold heaven, and the convoy to direct them thither. Now if the glass be spotted, instead of an angel they look upon a fury; and if the conduct be false, there is more danger in the guide than the way. None, therefore, are to walk so strictly as the ministry.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 5.—"*Holiness becometh thine house, O* LORD, *for ever.*" No hangings, no tapestry become God's house so well as holiness; and no place is so proper as the house of God for this costly, comely furniture. . . . . The blind heathen were choice and devout in the service of dumb idols; they served them in white, an emblem of purity; they thought nothing too good for those false gods, for whom the worst was not bad enough. Solon, the Athenian lawgiver, enacted, that none should serve the gods *obiter*, or by the by. that their sacrificers should purify themselves some days beforehand.—*George Swinnock.*

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HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Whole Psalm.—Revivals of religion described. I. God reigns. II. His power is felt. III. His kingdom is established. IV. Opposition is overcome. V. The word is valued. VI. Holiness is cultivated.

Verses 1, 2.—The prophet in the first verse describes our King: I. From his office. 1. He "reigns." He is the great and chief Monarch; he is no idle spectator of things below; but wisely, and justly, and powerfully administers all things. 2. He is a glorious King: "He is clothed with majesty." 3. He is a potent King: "The Lord is clothed with strength." 4. He is a warlike King: "He hath girded himself," buckled his sword upon his armour; for offence towards his enemies, for defence of his kingdom. II. From his kingdom. 1. It is universal: "The world." 2. It is fixed, firm, and stable: "The world also is stablished, and cannot be moved." 3. It is an everlasting kingdom: "From everlasting to everlasting; thy throne is established of old; thou art from everlasting."—*Adam Clarke.*

Verses 1, 2.—Shew, I. The royal proclamation. II. The imperial robe. III. The stable kingdom. IV. The ancient throne. V. The Eternal King.—*C. A. D.*

Verses 1, 2.—I. Make the great proclamation. The right, stability, antiquity, extent, perpetuity of the Lord's dominion. II. Note the different emotions it inspires. In the rebellious, condemned, loyal, &c. III. Negotiate for submission to the King.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 3.—The voice of the floods. I. The voice of Nature is the voice *of* God. II. It is a voice *from* God. III. It is a voice *for* God.

> "God hath a voice that ever is heard,
> In the peal of the thunder, the chirp of the bird:
> It comes in the torrent, all rapid and strong,
> In the streamlet's soft gush, as it ripples along;
> In the waves of the ocean, the furrows of land,
> In the mountain of granite, the atom of sand;
> Turn where ye may, from the sky to the sod,
> Where can ye gaze that ye see not a God?"
>
> —*G. R. Poetry by Eliza Cook.*

Verse 4.—I. God is mighty in creation. II. He is mightier in providence. III. He is mightiest in redemption.—*G. R.*

Verse 5.—I. Faithfulness becometh the word of God. II. Holiness becometh the house of God.—*G. R.*

Verse 5 (*last clause*).—I. Holiness becometh God's typical house, the temple. II. His greater spiritual house, the church. III. His smaller spiritual house, the believer. IV. His eternal house, heaven.—*C. A. D.*

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PSALM XCIV.

SUBJECT.—*The writer sees evil-doers in power, and smarts under their oppressions. His sense of the divine sovereignty, of which he had been singing in the previous psalm, leads him to appeal to God as the great Judge of the earth; this he does with much vehemence and importunity, evidently tingling under the lash of the oppressor. Confident in God's existence, and assured of his personal observation of the doings of men, the psalmist rebukes his atheistic adversaries, and proclaims his triumph in his God: he also interprets the severe dispensation of Providence to be in very deed most instructive chastisements, and so he counts those happy who endure them. The psalm is another pathetic form of the old enigma —"Wherefore do the wicked prosper?" It is another instance of a good man perplexed by the prosperity of the ungodly, cheering his heart by remembering that there is, after all, a King in heaven, by whom all things are overruled for good.*

DIVISIONS.—*In the first seven verses the psalmist utters his complaint againt wicked oppressors. From 8 to 11 he reasons against their sceptical notion that God did not notice the actions of men. He then shows that the Lord does bless his people and will deliver them, though for a while they may be chastened, 12—15. He again pleads for help in verse 16, and declares his entire dependence upon God for preservation, 17—19; yet a third time urges his plaint, 20, 21; and then concludes with the confident assurance that his enemies, and all other wicked men, would certainly be made to reap the due reward of their deeds,—"yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off."*

EXPOSITION.

O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.

2 Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud.

3 LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?

4 *How long* shall they utter *and* speak hard things? *and* all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?

5 They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage.

6 They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.

7 Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard *it*.

1. "*O* LORD *God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself:*" or, *God of retributions, Jehovah, God of retributions, shine forth!* A very natural prayer when innocence is trampled down, and wickedness exalted on high. If the execution of justice be a right thing,—and who can deny the fact?—then it must be a very proper thing to desire it; not out of private revenge, in which case a man would hardly dare to appeal to God, but out of sympathy with right, and pity for those who are made wrongfully to suffer. Who can see a nation enslaved, or even an individual downtrodden, without crying to the Lord to arise and vindicate the righteous cause? The toleration of injustice is here attributed to the Lord's being hidden, and it is implied that the bare sight of him will suffice to alarm the tyrants into ceasing their oppressions. God has but to show himself, and the good cause wins the day. *He* comes, he sees, he conquers! Truly in these

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evil days we need a manifest display of his power, for the ancient enemies of God and man are again struggling for the mastery, and if they gain it, woe unto the saints of God.

2. "*Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth.*" Ascend thy judgment-seat and be acknowledged as the ruler of men: and, moreover, raise thyself as men do who are about to strike with all their might; for the abounding sin of mankind requires a heavy blow from thy hand. "*Render a reward to the proud,*" give them measure for measure, a fair retaliation, blow for blow. The proud look down upon the gracious poor and strike them from above, as a giant might hurl down blows upon his adversary; after the same manner, O Lord, lift up thyself, and "return a recompense upon the proud," and let them know that thou art far more above them than they can be above the meanest of their fellow men. The psalmist thus invokes the retributions of justice in plain speech, and his request is precisely that which patient innocence puts up in silence, when her looks of anguish appeal to heaven.

3. "LORD, *how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?*" Shall wrong for ever rule? Are slavery, robbery, tyranny, never to cease? Since there is certainly a just God in heaven, armed with almighty power, surely there must be sooner or later an end to the ascendancy of evil, innocence must one day find a defender. This "*how long?*" of the text is the bitter plaint of all the righteous in all ages, and expresses wonder caused by that great enigma of providence, the existence and predominance of evil. The sound "how long?" is very akin to howling, as if it were one of the saddest of all the utterances in which misery bemoans itself. Many a time has this bitter complaint been heard in the dungeons of the Inquisition, at the whipping-posts of slavery, and in the prisons of oppression. In due time God will publish his reply, but the full end is not yet.

4. "*How long shall they utter and speak hard things?*" The ungodly are not content with deeds of injustice, but they add hard speeches, boasting, threatening, and insulting over the saints. Will the Lord for ever endure this? Will he leave his own children much longer to be the prey of their enemies? Will not the insolent speeches of his adversaries and theirs at last provoke his justice to interfere? Words often wound more than swords, they are as hard to the heart as stones to the flesh; and these are poured forth by the ungodly in redundance, for such is the force of the word translated *utter;* and they use them so commonly that they become their common speech (they utter and speak them)—will this always be endured? "*And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?*"—they even soliloquise and talk to themselves, and of themselves, in arrogance of spirit, as if they were doing some good deed when they crush the poor and needy, and spit their spite on gracious men. It is the nature of workers of iniquity to boast, just as it is a characteristic of good men to be humble—will their boasts always be suffered by the great Judge, whose ear hears all that they say? Long, very long, have they had the platform to themselves, and loud, very loud, have been their blasphemies of God, and their railings at his saints—will not the day soon come when the threatened heritage of shame and everlasting contempt shall be meted out to them?

Thus the oppressed plead with their Lord, and shall not God avenge his own elect? Will he not speak out of heaven to the enemy and say, "Why persecutest thou me"?

5. "*They break in pieces thy people, O* LORD," grinding them with oppression, crushing them with contempt. Yet the men they break in pieces are God's own people, and they are persecuted because they are so; this is a strong plea for the divine interposition. "*And afflict thine heritage,*" causing them sorrowful humiliation and deep depression of heart. The term, "thine heritage," marks out the election of the saints, God's peculiar interest and delight in them, his covenant relation, of long standing, to them and their fathers; this also is a storehouse of arguments with their faithful God. Will he not

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defend his own? Will a man lose his inheritance, or permit it to be contemptuously despoiled? Those who are ground down, and trampled on, are not strangers, but the choice and chosen ones of the Lord; how long will he leave them to be a prey to cruel foes?

6. "*They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.*" They deal most arrogantly with those who are the most evident objects of compassion. The law of God especially commends these poor ones to the kindness of good men, and it is peculiar wickedness which singles them out to be the victims not only of fraud but of murder. Must not such inhuman conduct as this provoke the Lord? Shall the tears of widows, the groans of strangers, and the blood of orphans be poured forth in vain? As surely as there is a God in heaven, he will visit those who perpetrate such crimes; though he bear long with them, he will yet take vengeance, and that speedily.

7. "*Yet they say, the* LORD *shall not see.*" This was the reason of their arrogance, and the climax of their wickedness: they were blindly wicked because they dreamed of a blind God. When men believe that the eyes of God are dim, there is no reason to wonder that they give full license to their brutal passions. The persons mentioned above not only cherished an infidel unbelief, but dared to avow it, uttering the monstrous doctrine that God is too far away to take notice of the actions of men. "*Neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.*" Abominable blasphemy and transparent falsehood! If God has actually become his people's God, and proved his care for them by a thousand acts of grace, how dare the ungodly assert that he will not notice the wrongs done to them? There is no limit to the proud man's profanity, reason itself cannot restrain him; he has broken through the bounds of common sense. Jacob's God heard him at the brook Jabbok; Jacob's God led him and kept him all his life long, and said concerning him and his family, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm;" and yet these brutish ones profess to believe that he neither sees nor regards the injuries wrought upon the elect people! Surely in such unbelievers is fulfilled the saying of the wise, that those whom the Lord means to destroy he leaves to the madness of their corrupt hearts.

8. Understand, ye brutish among the people: and *ye* fools, when will ye be wise?

9 He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?

10 He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, *shall not he know?*

11 The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they *are* vanity.

8. "*Understand, ye brutish among the people.*" They said that God did not *note*, and now, using the same word in the original, the psalmist calls on the wicked to *note*, and have regard to the truth. He designates them as boors, boarish, swinish men, and well was the term deserved; and he bids them understand or consider, if they can. They thought themselves to be wise, and indeed the only men of wit in the world, but he calls them "boars among the people": wicked men are fools, and the more they know, the more foolish they become. "No fool like a learned fool" is a true proverb. When a man has done with God, he has done with his manhood, and has fallen to the level of the ox and the ass, yea, beneath them, for "the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib." Instead of being humbled in the presence of scientific infidels, we ought to pity them; they affect to look down upon us, but we have far more cause to look down upon them. "*And ye fools, when will ye be wise?*" Is it not high time? Ye know the ways of folly, what profit have ye in them? Have ye no relics of reason left? no shreds of sense?

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If as yet there lingers in your minds a gleam of intelligence, hearken to argument, and consider the questions now about to be proposed to you.

9. "*He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?*" He fashioned that marvellous organ, and fixed it in the most convenient place near to the brain, and is he deaf himself? Is he capable of such design and invention, and yet can he not discern what is done in the world which he made? He made you hear, can he not himself hear? Unanswerable question! It overwhelms the sceptic, and covers him with confusion. "*He that formed the eye, shall he not see?*" He gives us vision; is it conceivable that he has no sight himself? With skilful hand he fashioned the optic nerve, and the eyeball, and all its curious mechanism, and it surpasses all conception that he can himself be unable to observe the doings of his creatures. If there be a God, he must be a personal intelligent being, and no limit can be set to his knowledge.

10. "*He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct?*" He reproves whole nations, can he not reprove individuals? All history shows that he visits national sin with national judgment, and can he not deal with single persons? The question which follows is equally full of force, and is asked with a degree of warmth which checks the speaker, and causes the inquiry to remain incomplete. It begins, "*He that teacheth man knowledge,*" and then it comes to a pause, which the translators have supplied with the words, "*shall not he know?*" but no such words are in the original, where the sentence comes to an abrupt end, as if the inference were too natural to need to be stated, and the writer had lost patience with the brutish men with whom he had argued. The earnest believer often feels as if he could say, "Go to, you are not worth arguing with! If you were reasonable men, these things would be too obvious to need to be stated in your hearing. I forbear." Man's knowledge comes from God. Science in its first principles was taught to our progenitor Adam, and all after advances have been due to divine aid; does not the author and revealer of all knowledge himself know?

11. Whether men admit or deny that God knows, one thing is here declared, namely, that "*The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.*" Not their words alone are heard, and their works seen, but he reads the secret motions of their minds, for men themselves are not hard to be discerned of him, before his glance they themselves are but vanity. It is in the Lord's esteem no great matter to know the thoughts of such transparent pieces of vanity as mankind are, he sums them up in a moment as poor vain things. This is the sense of the original, but that given in the authorised version is also true—the thoughts, the best part, the most spiritual portion of man's nature, even these are vanity itself, and nothing better. Poor man! And yet such a creature as this boasts, plays at monarch, tyrannises over his fellow worms, and defies his God! Madness is mingled with human vanity, like smoke with the fog, to make it fouler but not more substantial than it would have been alone.

How foolish are those who think that God does not know their actions, when the truth is that their vain thoughts are all perceived by him! How absurd to make nothing of God when in fact we ourselves are as nothing in his sight.

12 Blessed *is* the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law;

13 That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.

14 For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.

15 But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it.

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12. "*Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O* LORD." The psalmist's mind is growing quiet. He no longer complains to God or argues with men, but tunes his harp to softer melodies, for his faith perceives that with the most afflicted believer all is well. Though he may not feel blessed while smarting under the rod of chastisement, yet blessed he is; he is precious in God's sight, or the Lord would not take the trouble to correct him, and right happy will the results of his correction be. The psalmist calls the chastened one a "*man*" in the best sense, using the Hebrew word which implies strength. He is a man, indeed, who is under the teaching and training of the Lord. "*And teachest him out of thy law.*" The book and the rod, the law and the chastening, go together, and are made doubly useful by being found in connection. Affliction without the word is a furnace for the metal, but there is no flux to aid the purifying: the word of God supplies that need, and makes the fiery trial effectual. After all, the blessing of God belongs far rather to those who suffer under the divine hand than to those who make others suffer: better far to lie and cry out as a "man" under the hand of our heavenly Father, than to roar and rave as a brute, and to bring down upon one's self a death blow from the destroyer of evil. The afflicted believer is under tuition, he is in training for something higher and better, and all that he meets with is working out his highest good, therefore is he a blessed man, however much his outward circumstances may argue the reverse.

13. "*That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.*" The chastening hand and instructive book are sanctified to us, so that we learn to rest in the Lord. We see that his end is our everlasting benefit, and therefore abide quiet under all trying providences and bitter persecutions, waiting our time. The Mighty Hunter is preparing the pit for the brutish ones; they are prowling about at this time, and tearing the sheep, but they will soon be captured and destroyed, therefore the people of the Lord learn to rest in days of adversity, and tarry the leisure of their God. Wicked men may not yet be ripe for punishment, nor punishment ready for them: hell is a prepared place for a prepared people; as days of grace ripen saints for glory, so days of wantonness help sinners to rot into the corruption of eternal destruction.

14. "*For the* LORD *will not cast off his people.*" He may cast them down, but he never can cast them off. During fierce persecutions the saints have been apt to think that the Lord had left his own sheep, and given them over to the wolf; but it has never been so, nor shall it ever be, for the Lord will not withdraw his love, "*neither will he forsake his inheritance.*" For a time he may leave his own with the design of benefiting them thereby, yet never can he utterly desert them.

> "He may chasten and correct,
> But he never can neglect;
> May in faithfulness reprove,
> But he ne'er can cease to love."

15. "*But judgment shall return unto righteousness.*" The great Judge will come, the reign of righteousness will commence, the course of affairs will yet be turned into the right channel, and then all the godly will rejoice. The chariot of right will be drawn in triumph through our streets, "*and all the upright in heart shall follow it,*" as in gladsome procession. A delightful hope is here expressed in poetic imagery of much beauty. The government of the world has been for a while in the hands of those who have used it for the basest and most vicious ends; but the cry of prayer will bring back righteousness to the throne, and then every upright heart will have its portion of joy.

16 Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? *or* who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?

Notwithstanding the psalmist's persuasion that all would be well eventually,

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he could not at the time perceive any one who would stand side by side with him in opposing evil; no champion of the right was forthcoming, the faithful failed from among men. This also is a bitter trial, and a sore evil under the sun; yet it has its purpose, for it drives the heart still more completely to the Lord, compelling it to rest alone in him. If we could find friends elsewhere, it may be our God would not be so dear to us; but when, after calling upon heaven and earth to help, we meet with no succour but such as comes from the eternal arm, we are led to prize our God, and rest upon him with undivided trust. Never is the soul safer or more at rest than when, all other helpers failing, she leans upon the Lord alone. The verse before us is an appropriate cry, now that the church sees error invading her on all sides, while faithful ministers are few, and fewer still are bold enough to "stand up" and defy the enemies of truth. Where are our Luthers and our Calvins? A false charity has enfeebled the most of the valiant men of Israel. Our John Knox would be worth a mint at this hour, but where is he? Our grand consolation is that the God of Knox and Luther is yet with us, and in due time will call out his chosen champions.

17 Unless the LORD *had been* my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.

18 When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.

19 In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.

17. "*Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.*" Without Jehovah's help, the psalmist declares that he should have died outright, and gone into the silent land, where no more testimonies can be borne for the living God. Or he may mean that he would not have had a word to speak against his enemies, but would have been wrapped in speechless shame. Blessed be God, we are not left to that condition yet, for the Almighty Lord is still the helper of all those who look to him. Our inmost soul is bowed down when we see the victories of the Lord's enemies—we cannot brook it, we cover our mouths in confusion; but he will yet arise and avenge his own cause, therefore have we hope.

18. "*When I said, My foot slippeth*"—is slipping even now: I perceived my danger, and cried out in horror, and then, at the very moment of my extremity, came the needed help, "*thy mercy, O* LORD, *held me up.*" Often enough is this the case, we feel our weakness, and see our danger, and in fear and trembling we cry out. At such times nothing can help us but *mercy;* we can make no appeal to any fancied merit, for we feel that it is our inbred sin which makes our feet so ready to fail us; our joy is that mercy endureth for ever, and is always at hand to pluck us out of the danger, and hold us up, where else we should fall to our destruction. Ten thousand times has this verse been true in relation to some of us, and especially to the writer of this comment. The danger was imminent, it was upon us, we were going; the peril was apparent, we saw it, and were aghast at the sight; our own heart was failing, and we concluded that it was all over with us; but then came the almighty interposition: we did not fall, we were held up by an unseen hand, the devices of the enemy were frustrated, and we sang for joy. O faithful Keeper of our souls, be thou extolled for ever and ever. We will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in our mouths.

19. "*In the multitude of my thoughts within me.*" When I am tossed to and fro with various reasonings, distractions, questionings, and forebodings, I will fly to my true rest, for "*thy comforts delight my soul.*" From my sinful thoughts, my vain thoughts, my sorrowful thoughts, my griefs, my cares, my conflicts, I will hasten to the Lord; he has divine *comforts*, and these will not

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only console but actually *delight* me. How sweet are the comforts of the Spirit! Who can muse upon eternal love, immutable purposes, covenant promises, finished redemption, the risen Saviour, his union with his people, the coming glory, and such like themes, without feeling his heart leaping with joy? The little world within is, like the great world without, full of confusion and strife; but when Jesus enters it, and whispers "Peace be unto you," there is a calm, yea, a rapture of bliss. Let us turn away from the mournful contemplation of the oppression of man and the present predominance of the wicked, to that sanctuary of pure rest which is found in the God of all comfort.

20 Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?

21 They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.

20. "*Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?*" Such thrones there are, and they plead a right divine, but their claim is groundless, a fraud upon mankind and a blasphemy of heaven. God enters into no alliance with unjust authority, he gives no sanction to unrighteous legislation. "*Which frameth mischief by a law?*" They legalise robbery and violence, and then plead that it is the law of the land; and so indeed it may be, but it is a wickedness for all that. With great care men prepare enactments intended to put down all protests, so as to render wrong-doing a permanent institution, but one element is necessary to true conservatism, viz., righteousness; and lacking that, all their arrangements of the holders of power must come to an end, and all their decrees must in process of time be wiped out of the statute-book. Nothing can last for ever but impartial right. No injustice can be permanent, for God will not set his seal upon it, nor have any fellowship with it, and therefore down it must come, and happy shall be the day which sees it fall.

21. "*They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous,*" so many are there of them that they crowd their assemblies, and carry their hard measures with enthusiasm; they are the popular party, and are eager to put down the saints. In counsel, and in action, they are unanimous; their one resolve is to hold their own tyrannical position, and put down the godly party. "*And condemn the innocent blood.*" They are great at slander and false accusation, nor do they stick at murder; no crime is too great for them, if only they can trample on the servants of the Lord. This description is historically true in reference to persecuting times; it has been fulfilled in England, and may be again if Popery is to advance in future time at the same rate as in the past few years. The dominant sect has the law on its side, and boasts that it is the national church; but the law which establishes and endows one religion rather than another is radically an injustice. God has no fellowship with it, and therefore the synagogue of Ritualism will yet be a stench in the nostrils of all sane men. What evil times are in store for us it is not for us to prophesy; it is ours to leave the matter in the hands of him who cannot be in fellowship with an oppressive system, and will not always endure to be insulted to his face by Popish idols, and their priests.

22 But the LORD is my defence; and my God *is* the rock of my refuge.

23 And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; *yea*, the LORD our God shall cut them off.

22. Let the wicked gather as they may, the psalmist is not afraid, but sweetly sings, "*The* LORD *is my defence, and my God is the rock of my refuge.*" Firm as a rock is Jehovah's love, and there do we betake ourselves for shelter.

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In him, even in him alone, we find safety, let the world rage as it may; we ask not aid from man, but are content to flee into the bosom of omnipotence.

23. The natural result of oppression is the destruction of the despot; his own iniquities crush him ere long. Providence arranges retaliations as remarkable as they are just. High crimes in the end bring on heavy judgments, to sweep away evil men from off the face of the earth; yea, God himself interposes in a special manner, and cuts short the career of tyrants while they are in the very midst of their crimes. Wicked men are often arrested by the pursuivants of divine justice redhanded, with the evidences of their guilt upon them. "*He shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness.*" While the stolen bread is in their mouths wrath slays them, while the illgotten wedge of gold is yet in their tent judgment overtakes them. God himself conspicuously visits them, and reveals his own power in their overthrow, "*yea, the* LORD *our God shall cut them off.*"

Here, then, the matter ends; faith reads the present in the light of the future, and ends her song without a trembling note.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Verse 1.—"*O* LORD *God, to whom vengeance belongeth.*" It may perhaps seem to accord too little with a lover of piety, so strenuously to urge upon God to show himself an avenger against the wicked, and to rouse Him as if He were lingering and procrastinating. But this supplication must be regarded in its proper bearing; for David does not pray, neither should we pray, that God would take vengeance on the wicked in the same way that men, inflamed with anger and hatred, are wont often to avenge themselves of their enemies, but that He would punish them after his own divine manner and measure. The vengeance of God is for the most part a medicine for the evil; but ours is at times destruction even to the good. Therefore truly the Lord is alone the God of revenges. For we, when we think we have inflicted a penalty upon our enemy, are often much mistaken. What injury to us was the body of our enemy? in depriving him of which we nevertheless express all our bitterness. What wounded thee and wrought thee harm and shame, was the spirit of thine enemy, and that thou art not able to seize and hold, but God is able; and He alone has such power that in no way can the spirit escape his strength and force. Leave vengeance with Him, and He will repay. He admonishes us, that if we ourselves wish to be avengers of our own pains and injuries we may hurt ourselves more deeply than our enemy: for when we take vengeance on him, we indeed wound and do violence to his body, which in itself is vile and of little regard; but in our own best and most precious part, that is, in our spirit; we ourselves, by losing patience, receive a deep stain, because when virtue and humanity have been expelled thence, we meanwhile incur faults to be atoned for therein. Wherefore God is entreated to become Himself the avenger of our injuires, for He alone knows aright and is able to avenge; and to become such an avenger that only the very thing which injured us may be punished. Some greedy man has cheated thee in money, may He punish avarice in him. A proud man has treated thee with scorn, may He destroy his pride, etc. . . . This is vengeance most worthy to be inflicted of God, and by us to be sought.—*Jacopo Sadoleto*, 1477—1547.

Verse 1.—I do not think that we sufficiently attend to the distinction that exists between revenge and vengeance. "Revenge," says Dr. Johnson, "is an act of passion, vengeance of justice; injuries are revenged, crimes avenged." And it is from not attending to this essential distinction that the scorner has been led into such profane remarks, as if there were a vindictive spirit in the

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Almighty, and as if he found delight in wreaking vengeance on an adversary. The call which the psalmist here makes on God as a God to whom vengeance belongeth, is no other than if he had said, "O God, to whom justice belongeth!" Vengeance indeed is not for man, because with man's feelings and propensities it would ever degenerate into revenge. "I will be even with him," says nature; "I will be above him," says grace.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 1.—The two divine names (*El* and *Jehovah*,—*God* and LORD) recognize God as almighty, eternal, self-existent, bound by covenant to his people, and alone entitled to take vengeance.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verses 1—6.—

"Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughter'd saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipt stocks and stones,
Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piemontese that roll'd
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundredfold, who, having learn'd the way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe."

John Milton.

Verse 3.—"*How long shall the wicked, how long,*" etc. Twice he saith it, because the wicked boast day after day, with such insolency and outrage, as if they were above control.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—"*How long shall the wicked triumph?*" For "*triumph,*" the Hebrew word is יַעֲלֹז which signifies *to exalt.* That is, they give themselves vain applause on account of their prosperity, and declare their success both with words and with the gestures of their body, like peacocks spreading their feathers. "*How long shall they utter?*" etc. For "*utter*" the Hebrew is יַבִּיעוּ, *they shall flow, they shall cast forth.* The metaphor is taken from fountains springing out of the rock with a rush and abundance of water. Where the abundance of words is noted, their rashness, their waste and profusion, their sound and eagerness, their continuance and the difficulty of obstructing them. —*Le Blanc.*

Verse 3.—"*How long shall the wicked triumph?*" What answer shall we give, what date shall we put to this, "*How long?*" The answer is given in verse 23, "*He shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness,*" etc. As if he had said, Except the Lord cut them off in their wickedness, they will never leave off doing wickedly. They are men of such a kind that there is no curing of them, they will never have done doing mischief until they be cut off by death, therefore God threatens death to deter men from sin. A godly man saith, "If God kill me, yet will I trust in him;" and some wicked men say (in effect, if not in the letter), Till God kills us we will sin against him.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 3, 4.—"*Triumph,*" "*utter and speak,*" "*boast.*" In the very terms wherein the Psalmist complains of the continued prevalence of the wicked, there is matter of comfort, for we have three (rather four, as in the authorised version) words to denote speaking, and only one, *workers*, to denote action, showing us that they are far more powerful with their tongues than with their hands.—*Hugo Cardinalis, quoted by Neale.*

Verse 5.—"*They break in pieces thy people.*" They tread down; they grind; they crush. The Hebrew word is often used as meaning to crush under foot; to trample on; and hence it means to oppress. Lam. iii. 34, Isai. iii. 15.—*Albert Barnes.*

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Verse 6.—"*Widow*"; "*fatherless.*" An old Jewish writer * has pointed out how aptly the titles of *widow* and *orphan* befitted the Hebrew nation, because it had no helper save God only, and was cut off from all other people by its peculiar rites and usages, whereas the Gentiles, by their mutual alliances and intercourse, had, as it were, a multitude of kindred to help them in any strait. —*J. M. Neale.*

Verse 7.—"*They say, the* LORD *shall not see.*" As if they had said, Though God should set himself to search us out, and would greatly wish to see what we are doing, yet he shall not. We will carry it so closely and cunningly, that the eye of God shall not reach us. Their works were so foul and bloody, that the sun might be ashamed to look upon them, and they were so secret that they believed God could not look upon them, or bring them to shame for them.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 7.—"*The* LORD . . . *the God of Jacob.*" The divine names are, as usual, significant. That the self-existent and eternal God should not see, is a palpable absurdity; and scarcely less so, that the God of Israel should suffer his own people to be slaughtered without even observing it. The last verb means to mark, note, notice.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verses 8—11. —In these words the following particulars are to be observed. (1.) A certain spiritual *disease* charged on *some* persons, *viz.* darkness, and *blindness* of mind, appearing in their ignorance and folly. (2.) The great *degree* of this disease; so as to render the subjects of it *fools.* "*Ye fools, when will ye be wise?*" And so as to reduce them to a degree of *brutishness.* "*Ye brutish among the people.*" This ignorance and folly were to such a degree as to render men like beasts. (3.) The *obstinacy* of this disease; expressed in that interrogation, "*When will ye be wise?*" Their blindness and folly were not only very great, but deeply rooted and established, resisting all manner of cure. (4.) Of what *nature* this blindness is. It is especially in things pertaining to God. They were strangely *ignorant* of his perfections, like beasts: and had *foolish* notions of him, as though he did not see, nor know: and as though he would not execute justice, by chastising and punishing wicked men. (5.) The *unreasonableness* and *sottishness* of the notion they had of God, that he did not *hear*, did not *observe* their reproaches of him and his people, is shown by observing that he *planted* the ear. It is very *unreasonable* to suppose that he who gave power of perceiving words to *others*, should not perceive them himself. And the sottishness of their being insensible of God's all-seeing eye, and particularly of his seeing their wicked actions, appears, in that God is the being who *formed* the eye, and gave others a *power* of seeing. The sottishness of their apprehension of God, as though he did not know what they did, is argued from his being the *fountain* and original of all knowledge. The unreasonableness of their expecting to escape God's just chastisements and judgments for sin, is set forth by his chastising even the *heathen*, who did not sin against that light, or against so great mercies, as the wicked in Israel did; nor had ever made such a profession as they. (6.) We may observe, that this dreadful disease is ascribed to *mankind in general.* "*The Lord knoweth the thoughts of* MAN, *that they are vanity.*" The psalmist had been setting forth the vanity and unreasonableness of the thoughts of *some* of the children of men; and immediately upon it he observes, that this vanity and foolishness of thought is *common* and *natural to mankind.* From these particulars we may fairly deduce the following doctrinal observation: *That there is an extreme and brutish blindness in things of religion, which naturally possesses* the *hearts of mankind.*—*Jonathan Edwards.*

Verses 8—15.—God hath ability, bowels, verity. Ability, *He that made the eye, cannot he see? He that planted the ear, cannot he hear?* verses 8, 9, 10, 11.

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* Philo Judæus.

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Bowels, *He doth but chasten his, not cast them off*, verses 12, 13, 14. Verity, *this is but until a pit be made for the wicked*, verse 13. *Mordecai* is frowned upon, but till a gallows be made for Haman, and then *judgment returns unto righteousness.—Nicholas Lockyer.*

Verse 9.—"*He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?*" etc. The psalmist does not say, He that planteth the ear, *hath he not an ear?* He that formed the eye, *hath he not eyes?* No; but, Shall he not *hear?* Shall he not *see?* And why does he say so? To prevent the error of humanizing God, of attributing members or corporeal parts to the infinite Spirit.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 9.—"*Planted the ear.*" The mechanism of the ear, like a root *planted* in the earth, is sunk deep into the head, and concealed from veiw.—*Bagster's Comprehensive Bible.*

Verse 9.—The *planting* or deep seated position of the ear, as well as its wonderful construction, are illustrated by the following extract:—"The organ or instrument of hearing is in all its most important parts so hidden within the head, that we cannot perceive its construction by a mere external inspection. What in ordinary language we call the ear, is only the outer porch or entrance vestibule of a curious series of intricate, winding passages, which, like the lobbies of a great building, lead from the outer air into the inner chambers. Certain of these passages are full of air; others are full of liquid; and their membranes are stretched like parchment curtains across the corridors at different places, and can be thrown into vibration, or made to tremble, as the head of a drum or the surface of a tambourine does when struck with a stick or the fingers. Between two of these parchment-like curtains, a chain of very small bones extends, which serves to tighten or relax these membranes, and to communicate vibrations to them. In the innermost place of all, rows of fine threads, called nerves, stretch like the strings of a piano from the last points to which the tremblings or thrillings reach, and pass inwards to the brain. If these threads or nerves are destroyed, the power of hearing as infallibly departs as the power to give out sound is lost by a piano or violin when its strings are broken.

We know far less, however, of the ear than of the eye. The eye is a single chamber open to the light, and we can see into it, and observe what happens there. But the ear is many-chambered, and its winding tunnels traversing the rock-like bones of the skull are narrow, and hidden from us as the dungeons of a castle are, like which, also, they are totally dark. Thus much, however, we know, that it is in the innermost recesses of these unilluminated ivory vaults, that the mind is made conscious of sound. Into these gloomy cells, as into the bright chamber of the eye, the soul is ever passing and asking for news from the world without; and ever and anon, as of old in hidden subterranean caverns where men listened in silence and darkness to the utterance of oracles, reverberations echo along the surrounding walls, and responses come to the waiting spirit, while the world lifts up its voice and speaks to the soul. The sound is that of a hushed voice, a low but clear whisper; for as it is but a dim shadow of the outer world we see; so it is but a faint echo of the outer world we hear."—*George Wilson, in "The Five Gateways of Knowledge,"* 1861.

Verse 9.—"*He that planted the ear, &c.*" Shall the Author of these senses be senseless? Our God is not as that Jupiter of Crete, who was pictured without ears, and could not be at leisure to attend upon small matters. He is οὐς και νοῦς; he is also ὁλοφθαλμὸς, all eye, all ear. We read of a people called *Panotii;* God only is so, to speak properly—*John Trapp.*

Verse 9.—"*Formed the eye.*" The term used of the creation of the eye, is not merely "*made,*" as the Prayer Book version reads, but "*formed,*" πλάσας, *finxit*, directing our attention to the wonderful mechanism of the organs of sight, and thence to the marvellous skill of the Artificer.—*J. M. Neale.*

Verse 9.—"*He that formed the eye.*" The word here used is frequently

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employed in reference to a *potter;* and the idea is that God has moulded or formed the eye as the potter fashions the clay. The more the eye is studied in its structure, the more deeply shall we be impressed with the wonderful skill and wisdom of God.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 9.—"*The eye.*" As illustrating the wisdom displayed in the eye we have selected the following. "Our physical good demands that we should have the power of comprehending the world in all the respects in which it is possible for matter or its forces to affect our bodies. The senses completely meet this want. . . . . We are too apt to confine ourselves to the mere mechanism of the eye or ear, without considering how the senses supplement each other, and without considering the provision made in the world that it may be a fit place for the exercise of the senses. The eye would be useless without all the properties of light; the ear would have no power in a world without an atmosphere. Sight enables us to avoid danger, and seek distant needful objects. What a vast length of time and wearisome labour would it require for a blind man to learn what one glance of the eye may give to one blessed with sight. A race of blind men could not exist on this globe.

The sense of sight alone, as a means of adapting us to the world, would strike us as wonderful in its results, and worthy of the conception of the highest intelligence in adapting means to ends, if we knew nothing of the adjustments by which sight is secured. We can conceive of the power of sight as direct perception, without the aid of light, or of a special organ corresponding to the eye. But constituted as we are, we see only through the agency of light; and we perceive light only by a special organ; and objects only in consequence of a peculiar structure of that organ. Of all these relationships of light to objects, and of light to the eye, and of the parts of the eye to each other, not one of them is a necessary condition of matter. The arrangement of so many things by which this wonderful power of perceiving distant objects is secured, is the only one that will secure the end desired, out of an endless number of arrangements that can be conceived of. . . . . Whoever contrived the organ through which we are to perceive, understood perfectly all the properties of light, and the wants of the being that was to use it. The eye of man, though limited in its power to a certain range, gives all that the common wants of life demand. And if man needs greater range of vision, he has but to study the eye itself, and fashion instruments to increase its power; as he is able when the proper time has come in his civilization, to increase by science and art the efficacy of nearly all his physical powers. For the ordinary purposes of life, neither telescopic nor microscopic adjustment of the eye is needful.

But the eye has not only the power of vision so necessary to man, but it is an instrument of power, an instrument made up of distinct parts, of solids and liquids, of transparent and opaque tissues, of curtains, and lenses, and screens. Its mechanism can be accurately examined and the use of each part as perfectly understood as any of the works of man. We examine every part of it as we would a microscope. We have first the solid case which is to hold all the machinery, and upon which are to be fastened the cords and pulleys of its skilful mounting. This covering, opaque, white, and glistening, like silver on the back and sides of the eye, in front, where the light must enter, suddenly becomes transparent as the clearest crystal. Within this is a second coating that coming to the front changes just as suddenly into an opaque screen, through the tissues of which no ray of light can pass. That screen is self-adjusting, with a net-work that no art of man ever equalled. Whether expanding or contracting, its opening in the centre always remains a perfect circle, adapted in size to the intensity of the light. How much light shall enter the eye it determines without aid from us. Next there must be connection with the brain, the seat of the being for whom the provision is made. These two coatings are pierced upon the back part of the eye, and a thread drawn out from the brain is passed through this opening and spread out

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within the eye as a delicate screen upon which all impressions are to be made. To fill the larger portion of the cavity, there is packed into it a clear jelly, and imbedded in this a lens, fashioned with a skill that no artist can equal, to refract the light and throw the image on the perceptive screen. In front of this lens is another humor, not like jelly as the other, because in this, that delicate fringe the iris, is to float, and nothing but a watery fluid will answer its purpose. Here then we have a great variety of materials all brought together, of the exact quality and in the quantity needed, placed in the exact position which they ought to occupy, so perfectly adjusted that the most that man can do is to imitate the eye without ever hoping to equal it.

Nor is the curious structure of the eye itself all that is worthy of our attention. The instrument when finished must be mounted for use. A cavity is formed in solid bone, with grooves and perforations for all the required machinery. The eye, when placed, is packed with soft elastic cushions and fastened by strings and pulleys to give it variety and rapidity of motion. Its outer case is to cover it when not in use, and protect it when in danger. The delicate fringe upon its border never needs clipping; and set like a well-arranged defence, its points all gracefully turned back, that no ray of light may be obstructed. Above the protecting brow is another defence to turn aside the acrid fluids from the forehead, while near the eye is placed a gland that bathes the whole organ with a clear soothing fluid, to prevent all friction and keep its outward lens free from dust, and polished for constant use. When we consider all this, the perfect adaptation of the eye to our wants, the arrangement of every part of its structure on strict mechanical and optical principles, and all the provisions for its protection, we pronounce the instrument perfect, the work of a Being like man, but raised immeasurably above the most skilful human workman. What shall we say when we learn that this instrument was prepared in long anticipation of its use; that there is a machinery within it to keep it in constant repair; that the Maker not only adjusted the materials, but that he was the chemist who formed all these substances from the dust of the earth? We may be told that the architect found this dust ready at hand, existing from all eternity. We may not be able to prove the contrary, nor do we need to do so for this argument. It is enough for our present purpose to know that the eyes with which we now see, these wonderfully complex and perfect instruments, were not long since common earth, dust upon which we perchance have trod.

We can understand the mechanism of the eye, we can comprehend the wisdom that devised it; but the preparation of materials, and the adjustment of parts, speak of a power and skill to which man can never hope to attain. When he sees his most cunning workmanship surpassed both in plan and execution, shall he fail to recognise design? Shall we fail to recognise a builder when we contemplate such a work?"—*P. A. Chadbourne, in "Lectures on Natural Theology; or, Nature and the Bible from the same Author. New York*, 1867."

Verse 9.—"*Shall he not see?*" A god or a saint that should really cast the glance of a pure eye into the conscience of the worshipper would not long be held in repute. The grass would grow again around that idol's shrine. A seeing god would not do: the idolater wants a blind god. The first cause of idolatry is a desire in an impure heart to escape from the look of the living God, and none but a dead image would serve the turn.—*William Arnot.*

Verse 9.—He who made the sun itself, and causes it to revolve, being a small portion of his works, if compared with the whole, is he unable to perceive all things?—*Epictetus.*

Verse 9.—That is wise counsel of the Rabbins, that the three best safeguards against falling into sin are to remember, first, that there is an ear which hears everything; secondly, that there is an eye which sees everything; thirdly, that there is a hand which writes everything in the Book of Knowledge, which shall be opened at the Judgment.—*J. M. Neale.*

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Verses 9, 10.—It was no limited power that could make this eye to see, this ear to hear, this heart to understand; and, if that eye which he hath given us, can see all things that are within our prospect, and that ear, that he hath planted, can hear all sounds that are within our compass, and that heart, that he hath given us, can know all matters within the reach of our comprehension; how much more shall the sight, and hearing, and knowledge of that Infinite Spirit, which can admit of no bounds, extend to all the actions and events of all the creatures, that lie open before him that made them!—*Joseph Hall.*

Verse 10.—"*He that teacheth man knowledge*——." The question posts midway (for the words in Italics are not Scripture), the point of application being too obvious to need mention. "He that teacheth man all his knowledge." [Fill out the rest yourselves; think, What then?]—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 10.—"*He that teacheth man knowledge.*" What knowledge have we but that which is derived from himself or from the external world?—and what is that world, but his Creation?—and what is creation, but the composition, structure, and arrangement of all things according to his previous designs, plans, intentions, will, and mandate? In studying creation in any of its departments, we therefore study his mind: and all that we can learn from it must be his ideas, his purposes, and his performances. No author, in his compositions—no artificer, in his mechanisms, can more truly display their talents and ideas to others, than the unseen Creator manifests his thoughts and intelligence to us in the systems and substances which he has formed, and presents to our continual contemplation. In this sense, Nature is an unceasing revelation of them to us.—*Sharon Turner.*

Verse 11.—"*The* LORD *knoweth the thoughts.*" The thoughts of man's heart—what millions are there of them in a day! The twinkling of the eye is not so sudden a thing as the twinkling of a thought; yet those thousands and thousands of thoughts which pass from thee, that thou canst not reckon, they are all known to God.—*Anthony Burgess.*

Verse 11.—"*The* LORD *knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.*" What a humbling thought is here suggested to us! Let us examine it.

1. If vanity had been ascribed to the meaner parts of the creation—if all inanimate and irrational beings, whose days are as a shadow, and who know not whence they came nor whither they go, had thus been characterized—it had little more than accorded with our own ideas. But the humiliating truth belongs to man, the *lord* of the lower creation—to man, that distinguished link in the chain of being which unites in his person mortality and immortality, heaven and earth. "The LORD knoweth the thoughts of *man*, that they are vanity."

2. Had vanity been ascribed only to the exercise of our sensual or mortal part, or of that which we possess in common with other animals, it had been less humiliating. But the charge is pointed at that which is the peculiar glory of man the intellectual part, his *thoughts*. It is here, if anywhere, that we excel the creatures which are placed around us. We can contemplate our own existence, dive into the past and the future, and understand whence we came and whither we go. Yet in this tender part we are touched. Even the "*thoughts*" of man are vanity.

3. If vanity had been ascribed merely to those loose and trifling excursions of the imagination which fall not under the influence of choice, a kind of comers and goers, which are ever floating in the mind, like insects in the air on a summer's evening, it had been less affecting. The soul of man seems to be necessarily active. Everything we see, hear, taste, feel, or perceive, has some influence upon thought, which is moved by it as leaves on the trees are moved by every breeze of wind. But "thoughts" here include those exercises of the mind in which it is voluntarily or intensely engaged, and in which we are in earnest; even all our schemes, contrivances, and purposes. One

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would think, if there were anything in man to be accounted of, it should be those exercises in which his intellectual faculty is seriously and intensely employed. Yet the Lord knoweth that even these are vanity.

4. If during our state of childhood and youth only vanity had been ascribed to our thoughts, it would have been less surprising. This is a truth of which numberless parents have painful proof; yea, and of which children themselves, as they grow up to maturity, are generally conscious. Vanity at this period, however, admits of some apology. The obstinacy and folly of some young people, while they provoke disgust, often excite a tear of pity. But the charge is exhibited against *man*. "Man *at his best estate* is altogether vanity."

5. The decision proceeds from a quarter from which there can be no appeal. "*The* LORD *knoweth*" it. Opinions dishonourable to our species may sometimes arise from ignorance, sometimes from spleen and disappointment, and sometimes from a gloomy turn of mind, which views mankind through a distorted medium. But the judgment given in this passage is the decision of Him who cannot err; a decision therefore to which, if we had no other proof, it becomes us to accede.—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 11.—"*They are vanity.*" The Syriac version is, *For they are a vapour.* Compare James iv. 14.—*John Gill.*

Verse 12.—"*Blessed is the man,*" *&c.* I shall show the various benefits of affliction, when it is sanctified by the Spirit of God to those persons who are exercised by it. I. The Great God has made affliction the occasion of converting sinners, and bringing them into a spiritual acquaintance with Christ his Son. See Isa. xlviii. 10. II. God not only makes affliction the occasion of converting sinners at first, but after conversion he sanctifies an afflicted state to the saints, to weaken the remains of indwelling sin in them, and make them afraid of sinning against him in future time. III. God, in afflicting the saints, increases that good work of grace, which his Spirit has implanted in them. God causes his saints to grow in grace, when he corrects them with the rod of sorrow; God assimilates and makes the saints like unto himself, in a greater degree, by temporal troubles and distresses. Heb. xii. 10, 11. IV. God afflicts the saints for the improvement of their knowledge in divine things. The Psalmist says, in the words of the text, "*Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O* LORD, *and teachest him out of thy law.*" See also Ps. cxix. 71. V. The great God, by afflicting the saints, brings them unto him with greater nearness and frequency, by prayer and supplication. VI. God afflicts the saints, to make them better acquainted with the perfections of his nature. VII. To make them more conformed to Christ his Son. VIII. To subdue the pride of their hearts, and make them more humble. IX. God oftentimes discovers to the saints, in the season of their affliction, in a clearer manner, that grace which he has implanted in them, and refreshes their souls with the consolations of his Spirit. X. God afflicts the saints, to divide their hearts more from the love of the world, and to make them more meet for heaven.—*Outline of a Sermon by John Farmer*, 1744.

Verse 12.—Here observe generally, what it is which afflictions, or God by afflictions, teacheth his children; even the self-same thing which he teacheth in his word; as the schoolmaster teacheth his scholars the same thing by the rod, which he teacheth by words. The word, then, is the storehouse of all instruction. Look not for any new diverse doctrine to be taught thee by affliction, which is not in the word. For, in truth, herein stands our teaching by affliction, that it fits and prepares us for the word, by breaking and subdividing the stubbornness of our hearts, and making them pliable, and capable of the impression of the word. Wherefore, as the Apostle saith, that the law is our schoolmaster to Christ, Gal. iii. Because the law, by showing unto us our disease, forceth us to the physician. So likewise it may be said that afflictions are schoolmasters to the law. For whilst

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we are at ease and in prosperity, though the sons of thunder terrify never so much with the fearful cracks of legal menaces, yet are we as deaf men, nothing moved therewith. But when we are humbled and meekened by affliction, then is there way made for the terrors of the law; then do we begin with some reverence of attention to listen and give ear unto them. When therefore God sends us any affliction, we must know that then he sends us to the law and to the testimony. For he teaches us indeed in our affliction, but it is in his law. And therefore if in our affliction we will learn anything, we must take God's book into our hands, and carefully and seriously peruse it. And hereby shall it appear that our afflictions have been our teachers, if by them we have felt ourselves stirred up to greater diligence, zeal, and reverence in reading and hearing the word. . . . . After that the prophet had preferred his complaint to the Lord against the adversaries of the church, from the first verse to the eighth, he leaveth God, and in a sudden conversion of speech, turns himself from the party complained unto, to the parties complained of, the cruel oppressors of the church, terrifying them by those just judgments of God, which in fine must overtake them, and so consequently cheering and comforting the distressed church. But because the distress of the church's enemies of itself could be no sufficient matter of comfort unto her, therefore a second argument of further and that far more effectual consolation is added in this twelfth verse, drawn from the happy condition of the church, even while she is thus overborne with those tigerly and tyrannical persecutors. And the argument is propounded by the prophet, not directing his speech to the church, but rather in his own person, bringing in the church suddenly turning her speech from her enemies, with whom she was expostulating, to God himself, and breaking forth into this pathetical expostulation, "*Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O* LORD, *and teachest him out of thy law.*" From the coherence of which words with the former, we may observe, that the outward miseries of our enemies is but cold comfort, unless withal we have a persuasion of our own inward happiness. . . . It would do the child little good to see the rod cast into the fire, if he himself should be cast in after it. Therefore the church having in this place meditated of the just judgments of God, which should in due time befall her adversaries, and not finding sufficiency of comfort therein, here in this verse proceedeth to a further meditation of her own case and condition. Wherein she seemeth thus to reason to herself. What though these mine enemies be brought to their deserved ends? what though I know they be reserved for shame and confusion? What ease can this bring to my mind now dejected, and happy thinking itself as miserable as these my foes? Now these doubtful thoughts something disquieting her, further comfort is ministered unto her by the Spirit of God in this verse, whereby she is enabled to answer that objection she made against herself, namely, that she is assured, that as her adversaries' case is wretched, so is her own most happy and blessed.—*Daniel Dyke, in "The Schoole of Affliction,"* 1633.

Verse 12.—"*Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest,*" etc. If by outward afflictions thy soul be brought more under the inward teachings of God, doubtless thy afflictions are in love. All the chastening in the world, without divine teaching, will never make a man blessed; that man that finds correction attended with instruction, and lashing with lessoning, is a happy man. If God, by the affliction that is upon thee, shall teach thee how to loathe sin more, how to trample upon the world more, and how to walk with God more, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions how to die to sin more, and how to die to thy relations more, and how to die to thy self-interest more, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions how to live to Christ more, how to lift up Christ more, and how to long for Christ more, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions to get assurance of a better life, and to be still in a gracious readiness and preparedness for the day of thy death, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall

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teach thee by afflictions how to mind heaven more, and how to fit for heaven more, thy afflictions are in love. If God by afflictions shall teach thy proud heart how to lie more low, and thy hard heart how to grow more humble, and thy censorious heart how to grow more charitable, and thy carnal heart how to grow more spiritual, and thy froward heart how to grow more quiet, &c., thy afflictions are in love Pambo, an illiterate dunce, as the historian terms him, was a-learning that one lesson, "I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue," nineteen years, and yet had not learned it. Ah! it is to be feared that there are many who have been in this school of affliction above this nineteen years and yet have not learned any saving lesson all this while. Surely their afflictions are not in love, but in wrath. Where God loves, he afflicts in love, and wherever God afflicts in love, there he will first and last teach such souls such lessons as shall do them good to all eternity.

If you enjoy the special presence of God with your spirits in your affliction, then your affliction is in love. Hast thou a special presence of God with thy spirit, strengthening of that, stilling of that, satisfying of that, cheering and comforting of that? "*In the multitude of my thoughts,*"—that is, of my troubled, intricate, ensnared, intertwined, and perplexed thoughts, as the branches of a tree by some strong wind are twisted one within another, as the Hebrew word properly signifies,—"*Thy comforts delight my soul.*" Here is a presence of God with the soul, here are comforts and delights that reach the soul, here is a cordial to strengthen the spirit.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 12.—You may and ought to get especial rejoicing faith out of sanctified afflictions. Thus: "Whom God doth correct and teach, *him* he loves, *he* is blessed: (Ps. xciv. 12; Heb. xii. 6:) but God doth so to me: *ergo.*" Here are bills and prayers for mercies; but who looks after the issue, the teaching, the holy use? Sanctified afflictions are very good evidences, and so very comfortable. There are those who would not have lost their sufferings, temptations, afflictions, for any good. The blessed Spirit hath taught them that way many a divine truth by heart out of the word; they are sensible of it, and from it conclude the love of God in Christ to them; and thence they have joy and comfort,—*that* joy that angels cannot give, and devils cannot take. Sanctified troubles are tokens of special love.—*Christopher Fowler* (1610—1678), *in* "*The Morning Exercises.*"

Verse 12.—If we have nothing but the rod, we profit not by the rod; yea, if we have nothing but the word, we shall never profit by the word. It is the Spirit given with the word, and the Spirit given with the rod, by which we profit under both, or either. Chastening and divine teaching must go together, else there will be no profit by chastening.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 12.—God sees that the sorrows of life are very good for us; for, as seeds that are deepest covered with snow in winter flourish most in spring; or as the wind by beating down the flame raiseth it higher and hotter; and as when we would have fires flame the more, we sprinkle water upon them; even so, when the Lord would increase our joy and thankfulness, he allays it with the tears of affliction.—*H. G. Salter.*

Verse 12.—"*And teachest.*" *Teaching* implies both a schoolmaster, *a teacher*, instructing and *lessons taught.* In this *teaching* both these points are here noted out. And for the first, namely, the *schoolmaster*, it is twofold: 1. The outward affliction and chastisement, "*Whom thou chastisest, teachest,*" that is, whom by chastising thou teachest. 2. God himself, who is the chief and principal head schoolmaster, the other being but an inferior and subordinate one: "*Whom thou teachest.*" And for the second point, *the lessons taught*, they are included generally in those words, "*in thy law.*" To begin then with the schoolmasters, and first with the first.

The first schoolmaster is affliction. A sharp and severe and swingeing schoolmaster indeed, and so much the fitter for such stout and stubborn scholars as we are; who because we will not be overcome by fair means, must needs therefore be dealt withal by foul. For God doth not willingly

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afflict us, but being necessarily thereunto enforced, by that strength of corruption in us, which otherwise will not be subdued. So physicians and surgeons are constrained to come to cutting, lancing, and burning, when milder remedies will not prevail. Let us therefore hereby take notice of the hardness of our hearts, the fallow ground whereof cannot be broken up but by this sharp plough of affliction. See what dullards and blockheads we are, how slow to understand spiritual things, not able to conceive of them by the instruction of words, unless they be even beaten and driven into our brains by blows. So thick and brawny is that foreskin which is drawn over our uncircumcised ears and hearts, that no doctrine can enter, unless it be pegged, and hammered, and knocked into us by the fists of this sour and crabbed *schoolmaster*.

The second schoolmaster is God himself. Afflictions of themselves, though severe schoolmasters, yet can do us no good, unless God come by his Spirit, and teach our hearts inwardly. Let us therefore pray. that as in the ministry of God's word, so also of his works and judgments, we may be *all taught of God*. For it is his Spirit that quickeneth and animateth the outward means, which otherwise are a dead letter. And this is the reason that many men have rather grown worse by their afflictions, than anything better; because God's Spirit hath not gone with the affliction, to put life and spirit into it, as Moses observed in the Israelites, Deut. xxix. 2—4.—*Daniel Dyke.*

Verse 13.—"*That thou mayest give him rest.*" Here usually, but hereafter certainly. *Mors ærumnarum requies*, was Chaucer's motto: those that die in the Lord *shall rest from their labours*. Meanwhile they are chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world. 1 Cor. xi. 32.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 13.—"*To give him rest.*" This is the end of God's teaching, that his servant may wait in patience, unmoved by, safe *from, the days of evil* (comp. xlix. 5) seeing the evil all round lifting itself up, but seeing also the secret, mysterious retribution, slowly but surely accomplishing itself. In this sense the "rest" is the rest of a calm, self-possessed spirit, as Isai. vii. 4; xxx. 15; xxxii. 17; lvii. 20; and "*to give him*" signifies "that thou mayest give him."—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Verse 13.—"*Rest.*" Let there be a revival of the passive virtues. Mr. Hume calls them the "monkish virtues." Many speak of them slightingly, especially as compared with the dashing qualities so highly esteemed in the world. But quietness of mind and of spirit, like a broken heart, is of great price in the sight of God. Some seem to have forgotten that silence and meekness are graces.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 13.—"*Rest from the days of adversity.*" *To rest from the days of adversity* is not to be disturbed by them to such an extent as to murmur, or despond in spirit, but to trust in God, and in silence of the mind and affections expect from God deliverance. See Isai. vii. 4; xxvi. 20, &c. Moreover he says not בִּימֵי *in*, but מִימֵי *from the days* of adversity, an expression of greater elegancy and wider range of meaning. For there is a reference to the primary form of the verb שָׁקַט *to sink, to settle down*, as when the dregs of disturbed liquor fall to the bottom; when it is applied to the mind when shaken with a great agitation of cares, and full of bitterness. The dregs, therefore, sprung *from the days of adversity*, are pointed out as settling down. Besides, not only is rest of mind while the evils continue indicated, but also while they are ceasing, since מִן, *from*, has here, as not infrequently elsewhere, a *negative force*.—*Venema.*

Verse 13.—"*Until the pit be digged for the wicked.*" Behold, thou hast the counsel of God, and the reason why he spareth the wicked; the pit is being digged for the sinner. Thou wishest to bury him at once: the pit is as yet being dug for him: do not be in haste to bury him.—*Augustine.*

Verse 15.—My text contains two parts; the providence of God to his

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people, and the prosperity of the providence among them. The providence of God to his people lies much in after-games; God seems to go away from his, and then the wicked have the better: anon he returns, and then his people carry the day. "*Judgment shall return unto righteousness;*" or *justice shall return unto judgment;* a phrase of speech frequent in the Old Testament to note retaliation, *quid* for *quo*, like for like. The term is distinct as well as the phrase, and helps to give the sense of the Spirit of God here; צֶדֶק from צָדַק, *se asseruit*, justice shall assert herself; Christ shall assert his people, his promises, his threatenings. "Shall *return*," *retro-agi:* what evil men do to good shall be re-done to them, done back again upon them by God. Or this root, here rendered "*return*," may be rendered to abide and rest. In Psalm xxiii. 6, it is so rendered: "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Justice doth, as it were, go from home sometimes, when it visits the saints; but it returns to its home and dwelling, *i.e.*, the wicked. Justice is, as it were, from home, till it returns to the wicked, there it abides and dwells. "*Justice shall dwell and rest in judgment*," *i.e.*, in the execution of punishments upon wicked men. מִשְׁפָּט, from שָׁפַט, *judicium exercuit*, notes the exercise and execution of justice: a thing rests in its end; justice dwells and rests in judgment, *i.e.*, in its execution, in its end for which, and unto which and whom it is appointed.—*Nicholas Lockyer*, 1612—1684-5.

Verse 15.—"*Shall follow it.*" The right reading is in the margin,—*shall be after it*, or *after that;* that is, *shall observe it.* "He poureth contempt upon princes; he setteth the poor on high from affliction; whoso is wise *shall observe these things*," etc., Ps. cvii. 43: this Scripture, I think, in part explains the text. (2) "*Shall be after it;*" that is, shall confess and acknowledge it. 'Tis not a small thing to bring men to confess the justice of God in his dealings. (3) "*Shall be after it;*" that is, shall triumph in it, and so to be compared with and opened by Ps. lviii. 10, 11. (4) "*Shall be after it;*" that is, the works of God shall be of effectual operation, to bring such as are upright in heart more to love and obey God, and so it is to be compared with Ps. xxxi. 23.—*Nicholas Lockyer.*

Verse 16.—"*Who will rise up*," etc. I think we ought to look upon David here in a public capacity, as a prince or magistrate; and then as such he deplores the increase and confidence of the wicked; and having fortified himself in God by prayer, he resolves, in the words of the text, to do the duty of his station, to employ all the power God had given him for the extirpation of wickedness, and the reformation of an impious people; and earnestly invites and calls in to his assistance all that had either heart or ability for such a work, as being well aware of the great difficulty of it. This is the sense I prefer, because it best becomes the zeal and faith of David, best suits the spirit and genius of several other parallel psalms, and seems plainly to me, to have the countenance of the Targum and the Septuagint.

In the words thus explained we have these three things: 1. *The deplorable state of Israel.* This is easily to be collected from the form and manner of David's expressing himself here, "*Who will stand up for me?*" or *who will take my part?* As if he should have said, Such is the number and power of the wicked, that how much soever my heart is set upon a reformation, I can hardly hope to effect it, without the concurrence and joint endeavours of good men. And yet, alas! how little is the assistance I can reasonably expect of this kind? How few are the sincere friends of goodness? How great and how general is the coldness and indifference which possesses men in the things of God? 2. *The duty of the magistrate.* This is plainly implied here, and is, to curb and restrain wickedness, and to promote a general reformation. 3. *The duty of all good people.* Which is, as far as in them lies, to assist and encourage the magistrate in this good work.—*Richard Lucas*, 1697.

Verse 16.—"*Who will rise up for me against the wicked?*" In all ages, men who neither feared God nor regarded man have combined together

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and formed confederacies, to carry on the works of darkness. And herein they have shown themselves wise in their generation, for by this means they more effectually promoted the kingdom of their father the devil, than otherwise they could have done. On the other hand, men who did fear God, and desire the happiness of their fellow-creatures, have in every age found it needful to join together in order to oppose the works of darkness, to spread the knowledge of God their Saviour, and to promote his kingdom upon earth. Indeed he himself instructed them so to do. From the time that men were upon the earth, he hath taught them to join together in his service, and has united them in one body by one Spirit. And for this very end he has joined them together, "that he might destroy the works of the devil;" first in them that are already united, and by them that are round about them.—*John Wesley, in a Sermon on these words, preached before the Society for Reformation of Manners, Jan.* 30, 1763.

Verse 17.—"*Had been my help.*" The word signifieth not only *help*, but *summum et plenum auxilium*, an *helpfulness*, or *full help:* the Hebrew hath a letter more than ordinary, to increase the signification, as learned Mr. Leigh observeth: there is the sufficiency of help.—*Nathaniel Whiting, in "The Saints' Dangers, Deliverances, and Duties,"* 1659.

Verse 19.—"*In the multitude of my thoughts,*" etc. That is, just when they were come to their height and extremity in me. The comforts of God are seasonable, and observe the proper time for their coming, neither too soon, nor too late but, "*in,*" that is, just in the very point and nick of time. There is another thing here spoken of. In the "*thoughts,*" and in the "*multitude*" of the "thoughts;" not in the indifferency of thoughts, but in the perplexity; not in the paucity of thoughts, but in the plurality: our extremity is God's opportunity. "In the mount will the Lord be seen," when we have thought and thought and thought all we could, and know not what to think more, then does God delight to tender and exhibit his comforts to us. . . .

In the words "*within me*" we have, next, the intimacy or closeness, of this grief. The Hebrew word is בְּקִרְבִּי, *in medio mei.* The Arabic *be-kalbi, in corde meo.* And so likewise the Septuagint, ἐν τῇ καρδία μου, *in my very heart.* This is added by way of further intention and aggravation of the present evil and distress. *First,* To show the *secrecy* of this grief. Those evils which are external, and in the body, every one is ready to bemoan them, and to bewail them, and to take notice of them, and to shew a great deal of bowels towards those which are afflicted with them; but these griefs which are inward, and in the mind, they are such as are known but to God himself. . "The heart knoweth his own bitterness," saith Solomon, Proverbs xiv. 10.

Secondly, Here is hereby denoted the *settledness* and *radication* of this evil: it was within him and it was within his heart, that is, it was deeply rooted and fastened, and such as had a strong ground-work and foundation in him; such were these troublesome "*thoughts,*" they were got into his very inwards and bowels, and so were not easily got out again. *Thirdly,* Here is hereby also signified the *impression* which they had upon him, and the *sense* which he himself had of them. They were such as did grievously afflict him, and pierce him, and went near unto him, they went to his very heart, and touched him, as it were, to the quick, through the grievousness of them, as he speaks in another place concerning the reproaches of his enemies, Psalm xlii. 10: "As with a sword (or killing) in my bones mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?"

Now what are these "*comforts*" of God which the psalmist does more especially intend here in this place? In a word, they are the comforts which do flow from our *communion* with him. The comforts of his attributes, and the comforts of his promises, and the comforts of his gracious presence drawing near unto our souls, when it pleases him to shine upon us, and to express his

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good will to us, and to give us some evidence and assurance of his love and favour towards us; these are his comforts.

"*Delight.*" This is a transcendant expression, which the Holy Ghost in the pen of the prophet David comes up unto. It had been a great matter to have said, they satisfy my soul, or, they quiet me, no more but so, that is the highest pitch which a perplexed spirit can wish to itself. Those which are in great pain, they would be glad if they might have but ease, they cannot aspire so high as *pleasure and delight*, this is more than can be expected by them; but see here now the notable efficacy of these Divine comforts; they do not only *pacify* the mind, but they *joy* it; they do not only *satisfy* it, but *ravish* it; they not only *quiet*, but *delight* it. "*Thy comforts delight my soul.*" That is, not only take away the present grief, but likewise put in the room and place of it most unspeakable comfort and consolation; as the *sun* does not only dispel darkness, but likewise brings in a glorious light in the stead of it.

"*My soul.*" We showed before how the grief was in the mind, and therefore the comfort must be so also, that the remedy may answer the malady. Bodily pleasure will not satisfy for mind distraction: nothing will ease the soul but such comforts as are agreeable to itself, and such are these present comforts of God, they delight the *soul.*—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 19.—*Thoughts* considered simply in themselves do not contain any matter of grief or evil; they are the proper and natural issue and emanations of the soul which come from it with a great deal of easiness, and with a great deal of delight; but it is the *exorbitancy and irregularity* of them which is here intended, when they do not proceed *evenly and fairly*, as they ought to do, but with some kind of *interruption;* and so the word which is here used in the text seems to import; the Hebrew *sagnaphim* carrying an affinity with *segnaphim*, which is derived from a root which signifies properly a bough. Now we know that in a bough there are two things especially considerable, as pertinent to our present purpose. First, there's the *perplexity* of it. And, secondly, there's the *agitation.* Boughs usually catch, and intangle one in another, and boughs they are easily shaken, and moved up and down by the wind. If there be never so little *air* or *breath* stirring abroad, the boughs presently discover it, and are made sensible of it. So that this expression does serve very well to imitate and set forth unto us the perplexity and inconstancy of thoughts, which David was now troubled withal, and whereof he now complains, as grievous and offensive to him. They were not thoughts *in any consideration*, but *thoughts of distraction*, such thoughts as did bring some grief and trouble with them. This the Septuagint translators were so fully apprehensive of, that they quite leave out *thoughts*, and render it only by *griefs*, κατὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ὀδυνῶν μου: *according to the multitude of my sorrows.* But it is more full and agreeable to the word to put them both together—*my grievous and sorrowful thoughts*—such thoughts as in regard of the carriage and ordering of them, do bring grief and sorrow with them.

And here we may by the way observe thus much, that God need not go far to punish and afflict men when he pleases; he can do it even with *their own thoughts*, no more but so. He can gather a rod of these boughs, and make a scourge of these twistings, wherewith to lash them, and that to purpose. If he does but raise a tempest in the mind, and cause these thoughts to bluster and bustle one with another, there will be trouble and affliction enough, though there were nothing else. It is no matter whether there be any *ground* or *occasion* for it in the things themselves; it is enough that there be so but in the *conceit and apprehension.* God can so use a *fancy*, a mere toy and imagination itself, and so set it on upon the soul, that there shall be no quiet nor rest for it.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 19.—Observe the greatness of this man's distress. This is forcibly expressed in the text, though in our translation it is scarcely obvious. The word in it rendered "*thoughts*," scholars tell us, signifies originally the small

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branches of trees. The idea in the psalmist's mind appears to be this: 'Look at a tree, with its branches shooting in every direction, entangling and entwining themselves one with another; let the wind take them—see how they feel it, how restless they become and confused, beating against and striving one with another. Now my mind is like that tree. I have a great many thoughts in it; and thoughts which are continually shifting and changing; they are perplexed and agitated thoughts, battling one with another. There is no keeping the mind quiet under them; they bring disorder into it as well as sorrow." And mark the word "*multitude*" in the text; there is exactly the same idea in that. It signifies more than number; confusion. Think of a crowd collected and hurrying about: 'so,' says the psalmist, 'are my thoughts. I have a crowd of them in my mind, and a restless confused crowd. One painful thought is bad enough, but I have many; a multitude of them; and almost countless, a disturbed throng.' We now, then, understand the case we have before us. The man's sorrow arose, at this time, from disquieting thoughts within his own breast; and his sorrow was great, because these thoughts were many, and at the same time tumultuous. When the psalmist says, "*Thy comforts*," he means more than comforts of which God is the author or giver. God is the author and giver of all our comforts —of all the earthly comforts that surround us; they are all the work and gift of his gracious hand. . . We are to understand *here* such comforts as are peculiarly and altogether God's, such as flow at once from God; not from him through creatures to us, but from him immediately to us without the intervention of creatures. The comforts that we get from his attributes—from meditating on, and what we call realising them; the comforts we get from his promises—believing and hoping in him; and the comforts of his presence, he drawing near to our souls and shining into them—we knowing he is near us, conscious of it by the light and happiness and renewed strength within us. "*Thy* comforts"—the comforts we get from the Lord Jesus Christ; from looking at him, considering him; thinking of his person, and offices, and blood, and righteousness, and intercession, and exaltation, and glory, and his second coming; our meeting him, seeing him, being like him. "*Thy* comforts"—the comforts which come from the Holy Spirit, "the Comforter": when he opens the Scriptures to us, or speaks through ceremonies and ordinances, or witnesses within us of our adoption of God; shining in on his own work of grace in our hearts; enabling us to see that work, and to see in it God's peculiar, eternal love to us; not opening to us the book of life, and showing us our names there, but doing something that makes us almost as joyful as though that book were opened to us; showing us the hand of God in our own souls —his converting, saving hand—his hand apprehending us as his own; making us feel as it were, his grasp of love, and feel, too, that it is a grasp which he will never loosen.—*Charles Bradley.*

Verse 19.—"*Thy comforts delight my soul.*" Xerxes offered great rewards to him that could find out a new pleasure; but the comforts of the Spirit are satisfactory, they recruit the heart. There is as much difference between heavenly comforts and earthly, as between a banquet that is eaten and one that is painted on the wall.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 19.—"THY *comforts.*" Troubles may be of our own begetting; but true comforts come only from that infinite fountain, the God of consolation; for so he hath styled himself.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 19.—"*Delight my soul.*" The original word, שעשע, signifies "*to cause to leap or dance for joy;*" but the English language will not bear an application of this image to the soul; though we say "to make the *heart* leap for joy."—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 19.—Because the malignant host is first entered into the ground of my text, consider with me: 1. The rebels, or mutineers, "*thoughts.*" 2. The number of them, no less than a "*multitude.*" 3. The captain whose colours they bear; a disquieted mind; "*my* thoughts." 4. The field where the battle

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is fought; in the heart; *apud me*, "within me." In the other army we find, 1. *Quanta*, how puissant they are; "*comforts.*" 2. *Quota*, how many they are; indefinitely set down; abundant comfort. 3. *Cujus*, whose they are; the Lord's, he is their general; "*thy* comforts." 4. *Quid operantur*, what they do; they delight the soul. In the nature of them being comforts, there is tranquillity; in the number of them, being many comforts, there is sufficiency; in the owner of them, being "*thy*" comforts, there is omnipotency; and in the effect of them, delighting the soul, there is security.—*From Thomas Adams' Sermon entitled "Man's Comfort."*

Verse 19.—A text of this kind shows us forcibly the power of Divine grace in the human heart: how much it can do to sustain and cheer the heart. The world may afflict a believer, and pain him; but if the grace which God has given him is in active exercise in his soul, the world cannot make him unhappy. It rather adds by its ill treatment to his happiness; for it brings God and his soul nearer together—God the fountain of all happiness, the rest and satisfaction of his soul.

This psalm was evidently written by a deeply afflicted man. The wicked, he says, were triumphing over him; and had been so for a long while. He could find no one on earth to take his part against them. "*Who will rise up for me against the evildoers?*" he asks in the 16th verse; "*or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?*" And it seemed, too, as though God had abandoned him. His enemies thought so, and he seems to have been almost ready to think so himself. But what was the fact? All this time the Lord was secretly pouring consolation into his soul, and in the end made that consolation abundant. In appearance a wretched, he was in reality a happy man; suffering, yet comforted; yea, the text says *delighted*—"*Thy comforts delight my soul.*"—*Charles Bradley*, 1845.

Verse 20.—"*The throne of iniquity . . . which frameth mischief by a law.*" The first pretext of wicked men to colour their proceedings against innocent men is their *throne;* the second is the *law;* and the third is their *council.* What tyrant could ask more? But God has prepared an awful hell for impenitent tyrants, and they will be in it long before they now expect to leave the world.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 20.—"*The throne of iniquity . . . which frameth mischief by a law.*" If there never had been such thrones in the world, there would not have been that mention made of them in the Scripture. But such there have been. That of Jeroboam was one, who would not suffer the people, according to the divine command, to go up to Jerusalem to worship God, who had there placed his name; but spread, for them that went, nets upon Mizpah, and set snares upon Mount Tabor. (Hosea v. 1.) And such thrones there have been since, too many of them. Well saith the Psalmist, "*Shall they have fellowship with thee?*" No, no; God keeps his distance from them. Those that we call "stinking dunghills" are not so offensive to God as thrones of iniquity are, which shall neither be approved by him nor secured. Stay a while, Christians, and "in patience possess your souls;" for the world shall see that in due time he will overturn them all.—*Samuel Slater, in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 20.—"*Which frameth mischief by a law,*" *i.e.*, frame wicked laws, or under the colour of law and justice, oppress the innocent. *Summum jus, summa injuria*, the higher the law, the greater the injustice, and injuries may and are too often done *ex pravá interpretatione legis*, from a wicked interpretation of the law. With those who do injustice with the sword of justice, God will have no fellowship.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 23.—"*He shall bring upon them their own iniquity,*" etc. It is an ill work wicked ones are about, they make fetters for their own feet, and build

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houses for to fall upon their own heads; so mischievous is the nature of sin that it damnifies and destroys the parents of it.—*William Greenhill.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—I. Retribution the prerogative of God alone. II. Under what aspects may we desire his rendering it. III. How, and when he will surely fulfil this righteous wish.

Verse 1.—I. Vengeance belongs to God and not to man. II. Vengeance is better in the hands of God than of man. "Let us fall into the hands of God," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—The peculiar provocation of the sin of pride and its kindred vices. Its influence on the proud, on their fellow men, and upon God himself.

Verse 3.—The duration of the reign of evil. I. Till it has filled up its measure of guilt. II. Till it has proved its own folly. III. Till it has developed the graces and prayers of saints. IV. Till it has emptied man of all human trust and driven us to look to the Lord alone, his Spirit, and his advent.

Verse 3.—I. The sweet potion of the wicked—present triumph. II. The gall which embitters it—it is but temporary, and is prayed against.—*C. A. Davis.*

Verses 5—10.—I. High-handed oppression by the wicked (verses 5, 6). II. Hard-hearted indifference to Divine supervision (verse 7). III. Clear-headed demonstration of the Divine cognisance and vengeance (verses 8—10). —*C. A. D.*

Verses 6—9.—I. Conspicuous sin. II. Absurd supposition. III. Overwhelming argument.

Verse 8.—Practical Atheists. I. Truly described. II. Wisely counselled. —*C. A. D.*

Verses 8—11.—I. The Exhortation (verse 8). II. The Expostulation (verses 9, 10). III. The Affirmation (verse 11).—*G. R.*

Verses 9, 10.—True Rationalism; or, Reason's Revelation of God. —*C. A. D.*

Verse 11.—I. With respect to the present world, consider what multitudes of thoughts are employed in vain. 1. In seeking satisfaction where it is not to be found. 2. In poring on events which cannot be recalled. 3. In anticipating evils which never befall us. 4. To these may be added the valuing ourselves on things of little or no account. 5. In laying plans which must be disconcerted. II. Let us see what are man's thoughts with regard to religion, and the concerns of a future life. 1. What are the thoughts of the heathen world about religion? 2. What are all the thoughts of the Christian world, where God's thoughts are neglected? 3. What is all that practical atheism which induces multitudes to act as if there were no God? 4. What are all the unbelieving, self-flattering imaginations of wicked men, as though God were not in earnest in his declarations and threatenings? 5. What are the conceits of the self-righteous, by which they buoy up their minds with vain hopes, and refuse to submit to the righteousness of God?—*Andrew Fuller.*

Verse 11.—God's intimate knowledge of man. A startling truth. A humiliating truth.

Verses 12, 13.—Christ's College. The Master, the Book, the Rod, the blessed Scholar, and the result of his education.

Verses 12, 13.—I. The Blessed. 1. Divinely taught. 2. Divinely chastised. II. The Blessing. 1. Rest in Affliction. 2. Rest from Affliction.—*G. R.*

Verse 14.—I. Fear implied. That God will cast off, forsake, etc. II. Fear denied. God will not cast off—will not forsake.—*G. R.*

Verse 14.—I. Display his bright doctrine on a dark background. What if

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the converse were true? Considerations that might lead us to apprehend it true. II. Joyfully regard the glowing truth itself. The doctrine declared. The reasons hinted (His people. His inheritance). The confidence expressed. —*C. A. D.*

Verse 15.—I. Judgment suspended. II. Judgment returned. III. Judgment acknowledged.—*G. R.*

Verse 16.—I. The question asked by the church of her champions. II. The answer of every true-hearted man. III. The yet more encouraging answer of her Lord.

Verses 16, 17.—The sole source of succour. I. A loud cry for help. As from a champion, or advocate. II. Earth's answer. A dead silence, disturbed only by echo (verse 17). III. The succouring voice that breaks the silence—the Lord's (verse 17).—*C. A. D.*

Verse 18.—The blessedness of the confession of weakness. I. The confession. II. The succour. III. The time. IV. The acknowledgment.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 19.—I. In the multitude of my *unbelieving* thoughts thy comforts delight my soul. II. In the multitude of my *penitential* thoughts thy comforts, etc. III. In the multitude of my *worldly* thoughts, etc. IV. In the multitude of my *family* or *social* thoughts, etc. V. Of my *desponding* thoughts, etc. VI. Of my *prospective* thoughts, etc. Or I. There is no consolation for man in himself. II. There is no consolation for him in other creatures. III. His only consolation is in God.—*G. R.*

Verse 19.—I. The soul jostled in the thoroughfare of anxious thoughts. II. The delectable company nevertheless enjoyed.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 20.—"It is the law of the land, you know,"—the limit of this authority both in temporal and spiritual matters.

Verse 20.—I. God can have no fellowship with the wicked. II. The wicked can have no fellowship with God.—*G. R.*

Verse 20.—Divine politics. I. There are thrones erected in opposition to the throne of God, "thrones of iniquity," *e.g.* which trespass on civil liberty, which infringe religious equality, which derive revenue from evil commerce, etc. II. Such thrones, whatever their pretensions, are excluded from divine fellowship; between them and God a great gulf is fixed.—*C. A. D.*

Verses 21, 22.—I. The Danger of the righteous (verse 21). II. Their Defence (verse 22).—*G. R.*

Verses 21—23.—I. Sentence passed in the court of injustice (verse 21). II. An element in the case not considered by the court (verse 22). III. The sentence consequently alighting on the right heads (verse 23). (This passage, under a very thin veil, exhibits Christ. Matt. xxvii. 1.)—*C. A. D.*

Verse 23.—I. None may punish God's enemies but himself. "He shall bring," etc. II. None need punish them but himself. 1. It will be complete, —"shall cut them off." 2. Certain. "Yea," etc.—*G. R.*

WORK ON THE NINETY-FOURTH PSALM.

In the Works of Cardinal Sadoleto (1477—1547), pp. 895—972, there is an Exposition of this Psalm, 8vo. edition, Anno Domini MDCVII.

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PSALM XCV.

This Psalm has no title, and all we know of its authorship is that Paul quotes it as "in David." (Heb. iv. 7.) It is true that this may merely signify that it is to be found in the collection known as David's Psalms; but if such were the Apostle's meaning it would have been more natural for him to have written, "saying in the Psalms;" we therefore incline to the belief that David was the actual author of this poem. It is in its original a truly Hebrew song, directed both in its exhortation and warning to the Jewish people, but we have the warrant of the Holy Spirit in the epistle to the Hebrews for using its appeals and entreaties when pleading with Gentile believers. It is a psalm of invitation to worship. It has about it a ring like that of church bells, and like the bells it sounds both merrily and solemnly, at first ringing out a lively peal, and then dropping into a funeral knell as if tolling at the funeral of the generation which perished in the wilderness. We will call it THE PSALM OF THE PROVOCATION.

DIVISION.—*It would be correct as to the sense to divide this psalm into an invitation and a warning, so as to commence the second part with the last clause of verse 7: but upon the whole it may be more convenient to regard verse 6 as "the beating heart of the psalm," as Hengstenberg calls it, and make the division at the end of verse 5. Thus it will form* (1) *an invitation with reasons, and* (2) *an invitation with warnings.*

EXPOSITION.

O COME, let us sing unto the LORD, let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

3 For the LORD *is* a great God, and a great King above all gods.

4 In his hand *are* the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills *is* his also.

5 The sea *is* his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry *land.*

1. "*O come, let us sing unto the* LORD." Other nations sing unto their gods, let us sing unto Jehovah. We love him, we admire him, we reverence him, let us express our feelings with the choicest sounds, using our noblest faculty for its noblest end. It is well thus to urge others to magnify the Lord, but we must be careful to set a worthy example ourselves, so that we may be able not only to cry "Come," but also to add "*let us* sing," because we are singing ourselves. It is to be feared that very much even of religious singing is not unto the Lord but unto the ear of the congregation: above all things we must in our service of song take care that all we offer is with the heart's sincerest and most fervent intent directed toward the Lord himself. "*Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.*" With holy enthusiasm let us sing, making a sound which shall indicate our earnestness; with abounding joy let us lift up our voices, actuated by that happy and peaceful spirit which trustful love is sure to foster. As the children of Israel sang for joy when the smitten rock poured forth its cooling streams, so let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. The author of this song had in his mind's eye the rock, the tabernacle, the Red Sea, and the mountains of Sinai, and he alludes to them all in this first part of his hymn. God is our abiding, immutable, and mighty rock, and in him we find deliverance and safety, therefore

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it becomes us to praise him with heart and with voice from day to day; and especially should we delight to do this when we assemble as his people for public worship.

> "Come let us to the Lord sing out
> With trumpet voice and choral shout."

2. "*Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving.*" Here is probably a reference to the peculiar presence of God in the Holy of Holies above the mercy-seat, and also to the glory which shone forth out of the cloud which rested above the tabernacle. Everywhere God is present, but there is a peculiar presence of grace and glory into which men should never come without the profoundest reverence. We may make bold to come before the immediate presence of the Lord—for the voice of the Holy Ghost in this psalm invites us, and when we do draw near to him we should remember his great goodness to us and cheerfully confess it. Our worship should have reference to the past as well as to the future; if we do not bless the Lord for what we have already received, how can we reasonably look for more. We are permitted to bring our petitions, and therefore we are in honour bound to bring our thanksgivings. "*And make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.*" We should shout as exultingly as those do who triumph in war, and as solemnly as those whose utterance is a psalm. It is not always easy to unite enthusiasm with reverence, and it is a frequent fault to destroy one of these qualities while straining after the other. The perfection of singing is that which unites joy with gravity, exultation with humility, fervency with sobriety. The invitation given in the first verse is thus repeated in the second with the addition of directions, which indicate more fully the intent of the writer. One can imagine David in earnest tones persuading his people to go up with him to the worship of Jehovah with sound of harp and hymn, and holy delight. The gladsomeness of his exhortation is noteworthy, the noise is to be *joyful;* this quality he insists upon twice. It is to be feared that this is too much overlooked in ordinary services, people are so impressed with the idea that they ought to be serious that they put on the aspect of misery, and quite forget that joy is as much a characteristic of true worship as solemnity itself.

3. "*For the* LORD *is a great God, and a great King above all gods.*" No doubt the surrounding nations imagined Jehovah to be a merely local deity, the god of a small nation, and therefore one of the inferior deities; the psalmist utterly repudiates such an idea. Idolaters tolerated gods many and lords many, giving to each a certain measure of respect; the monotheism of the Jews was not content with this concession, it rightly claimed for Jehovah the chief place, and the supreme power. He is great, for he is all in all; he is a great King above all other powers and dignitaries, whether angels or princes, for they owe their existence to him; as for the idol gods, they are not worthy to be mentioned. This verse and the following supply some of the reasons for worship, drawn from the being, greatness, and sovereign dominion of the Lord.

4. "*In his hand are the deep places of the earth.*" He is the God of the valleys and the hills, the caverns, and the peaks. Far down where the miners sink their shafts, deeper yet where lie the secret oceans by which springs are fed, and deepest of all in the unknown abyss where rage and flame the huge central fires of earth, there Jehovah's power is felt, and all things are under the dominion of his hand. As princes hold the mimic globe in their hands, so does the Lord in very deed hold the earth. When Israel drank of the crystal fount which welled up from the great deep, below the smitten rock, the people knew that in the Lord's hands were the deep places of the earth. "*The strength of the hills is his also.*" When Sinai was altogether on a smoke the tribes learned that Jehovah was God of the hills as well as of the valleys. Everywhere and at all times is this true; the Lord rules upon the high places of the earth in lonely majesty. The vast foundations, the gigantic spurs, the incalculable masses, the untrodden heights of the mountains are all the Lord's.

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These are his fastnesses and treasure-houses, where he stores the tempest and the rain; whence also he pours the ice-torrents and looses the avalanches. The granite peaks and adamantine aiguilles are his, and his the precipices and the beetling crags. Strength is the main thought which strikes the mind when gazing on those vast ramparts of cliff which front the raging sea, or peer into the azure sky, piercing the clouds, but it is to the devout mind the strength of God; hints of Omnipotence are given by those stern rocks which brave the fury of the elements, and like walls of brass defy the assaults of nature in her wildest rage.

5. "*The sea is his.*" This was seen to be true at the Red Sea when the waters saw their God, and obediently stood aside to open a pathway for his people. It was not Edom's sea though it was red, nor Egypt's sea though it washed her shores. The Lord on high reigned supreme over the flood, as King for ever and ever. So is it with the broad ocean, whether known as Atlantic or Pacific, Mediterranean or Arctic; no man can map it out and say "'Tis mine"; the illimitable acreage of waters knows no other lord but God alone. Jehovah rules the waves. Far down in vast abysses, where no eye of man has gazed, or foot of diver has descended, he is sole proprietor; every rolling billow and foaming wave owns him for monarch; Neptune is but a phantom, the Lord is God of ocean. "*And he made it.*" Hence his right and sovereignty. He scooped the unfathomed channel and poured forth the overflowing flood; seas were not fashioned by chance, nor their shores marked out by the imaginary finger of fate; God made the main, and every creek, and bay, and current, and far-sounding tide owns the great Maker's hand. All hail, Creator and Controller of the sea, let those who fly in the swift ships across the wonder-realm of waters worship thee alone!

"*And his hands formed the dry land.*" Whether fertile field or sandy waste, he made all that men call *terra firma*, lifting it from the floods and fencing it from the overflowing waters. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." He bade the isles upraise their heads, he levelled the vast plains, upreared the table-lands, cast up the undulating hills, and piled the massive Alps. As the potter moulds his clay, so did Jehovah with his hands fashion the habitable parts of the earth. Come ye, then, who dwell on this fair world, and worship him who is conspicuous where'er ye tread! Count it all as the floor of a temple where the footprints of the present Deity are visible before your eyes if ye do but care to see. The argument is overpowering if the heart be right; the command to adore is alike the inference of reason and the impulse of faith.

6 O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

7 For he *is* our God; and we *are* the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice,

8 Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, *and* as *in* the day of temptation in the wilderness:

9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work.

10 Forty years long was I grieved with *this* generation, and said, It *is* a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways:

11 Unto whom I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

6. Here the exhortation to worship is renewed and backed with a motive which, to Israel of old, and to Christians now, is especially powerful; for both the Israel after the flesh and the Israel of faith may be described as the people of his pasture, and by both he is called "our God." "*O come, let us*

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worship and bow down." The adoration is to be humble. The "joyful noise" is to be accompanied with lowliest reverence. We are to worship in such style that the bowing down shall indicate that we count ourselves to be as nothing in the presence of the all-glorious Lord. "*Let us kneel before the* LORD *our maker.*" As suppliants must we come; joyful, but not presumptuous; familiar as children before a father, yet reverential as creatures before their maker. Posture is not everything, yet is it something; prayer is heard when knees cannot bend, but it is seemly that an adoring heart should show its awe by prostrating the body, and bending the knee.

7. "*For he is our God.*" Here is the master reason for worship. Jehovah has entered into covenant with *us*, and from all the world beside has chosen us to be his own elect. If others refuse him homage, we at least will render it cheerfully. He is ours, and our God; ours, therefore will we love him; our God, therefore will we worship him. Happy is that man who can sincerely believe that this sentence is true in reference to himself. "*And we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.*" As he belongs to us, so do we belong to him. "My Beloved is mine, and I am his." And we are his as the people whom he daily feeds and protects. Our pastures are not ours, but his; we draw all our supplies from his stores. We are his, even as sheep belong to the shepherd, and his hand is our rule, our guidance, our government, our succour, our source of supply. Israel was led through the desert, and we are led through this life by "that great Shepherd of the sheep." The hand which cleft the sea and brought water from the rock is still with us, working equal wonders. Can we refuse to "worship and bow down" when we clearly see that "this God is our God for ever and ever, and will be our guide, even unto death"?

But what is this warning which follows? Alas, it was sorrowfully needed by the Lord's ancient people, and is not one whit the less required by ourselves. The favoured nation grew deaf to their Lord's command, and proved not to be truly his sheep, of whom it is written, "My sheep hear my voice": will this turn out to be our character also? God forbid. "*To day if ye will hear his voice.*" Dreadful "*if.*" Many would not hear, they put off the claims of love, and provoked their God. "To-day," in the hour of grace, in the day of mercy, we are tried as to whether we have an ear for the voice of our Creator. Nothing is said of to-morrow, "he limiteth a certain day," he presses for immediate attention, for our own sakes he asks instantaneous obedience. Shall we yield it? The Holy Ghost saith "To-day," will we grieve him by delay?

8. "*Harden not your heart.*" If ye will hear, learn to fear also. The sea and the land obey him, do not prove more obstinate than they!

> "Yield to his love who round you now
> The bands of a man would cast."

We cannot soften our hearts, but we can harden them, and the consequences will be fatal. To-day is too good a day to be profaned by the hardening of our hearts against our own mercies. While mercy reigns let not obduracy rebel. "*As in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness*" (or, "like Meribah, like the day of Massah in the wilderness"). Be not wilfully, wantonly, repeatedly, obstinately rebellious. Let the example of that unhappy generation serve as a beacon to you; do not repeat the offences which have already more than enough provoked the Lord. God remembers men's sins, and the more memorably so when they are committed by a favoured people, against frequent warnings, in defiance of terrible judgments, and in the midst of superlative mercies; such sins write their record in marble. Reader, this verse is for you, for you even if you can say, "He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture." Do not seek to turn aside the edge of the warning; thou hast good need of it, give good heed to it.

9. "*When your fathers tempted me.*" As far as they could do so they tempted God to change his usual way, and to do their sinful bidding, and

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though he cannot be tempted of evil, and will never yield to wicked requests, yet their intent was the same, and their guilt was none the less. God's way is perfect, and when we would have him alter it to please us, we are guilty of tempting him; and the fact that we do so in vain, while it magnifies the Lord's holiness, by no means excuses our guilt. We are in most danger of this sin in times of need, for then it is that we are apt to fall into unbelief, and to demand a change in those arrangements of providence which are the transcript of perfect holiness and infinite wisdom. Not to acquiesce in the will of God is virtually to tempt him to alter his plans to suit our imperfect views of how the universe should be governed. "*Proved me.*" They put the Lord to needless tests, demanding new miracles, fresh interpositions, and renewed tokens of his presence. Do not we also peevishly require frequent signs of the Lord's love other than those which every hour supplies? Are we not prone to demand specialities, with the alternative secretly offered in our hearts, that if they do not come at our bidding we will disbelieve? True, the Lord is very condescending, and frequently grants us marvellous evidences of his power, but we ought not to require them. Steady faith is due to one who is so constantly kind. After so many proofs of his love, we are ungrateful to wish to prove him again, unless it be in those ways of his own appointing, in which he has said, "Prove me now." If we were for ever testing the love of our wife or husband, and remained unconvinced after years of faithfulness, we should wear out the utmost human patience. Friendship only flourishes in the atmosphere of confidence, suspicion is deadly to it: shall the Lord God, true and immutable, be day after day suspected by his own people? Will not this provoke him to anger? "*And saw my work.*" They tested him again and again, throughout forty years, though each time his work was conclusive evidence of his faithfulness. Nothing could convince them for long.

> "They saw his wonders wrought,
> And then his praise they sung;
> But soon his works of pow'r forgot,
> And murmur'd with their tongue.
>
> "Now they believe his word,
> While rocks with rivers flow;
> Now with their lusts provoke the Lord,
> And he reduc'd them low."

Fickleness is bound up in the heart of man, unbelief is our besetting sin; we must for ever be seeing, or we waver in our believing. This is no mean offence, and will bring with it no small punishment.

10. "*Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.*" The impression upon the divine mind is most vivid; he sees them before him now, and calls them "*this* generation." He does not leave his prophets to upbraid the sin, but himself utters the complaint and declares that he was grieved, nauseated, and disgusted. It is no small thing which can grieve our long-suffering God to the extent which the Hebrew word here indicates, and if we reflect a moment we shall see the abundant provocation given; for no one who values his veracity can endure to be suspected, mistrusted, and belied, when there is no ground for it, but on the contrary the most overwhelming reason for confidence. To such base treatment was the tender Shepherd of Israel exposed, not for a day or a month, but for forty years at a stretch, and that not by here and there an unbeliever, but by a whole nation, in which only two men were found so thoroughly believing as to be exempted from the doom which at last was pronounced upon all the rest. Which shall we most wonder at, the cruel insolence of man, or the tender patience of the Lord? Which shall leave the deepest impression on our minds, the sin or the punishment? unbelief, or the barring of the gates of Jehovah's rest against the unbelievers? "*And said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways.*" Their heart was obstinately and constantly at fault; it was

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not their head which erred, but their very heart was perverse: love, which appealed to their affections, could not convert them. The heart is the mainspring of the man, and if it be not in order, the entire nature is thrown out of gear. If sin were only skin-deep, it might be a slight matter; but since it has defiled the soul, the case is bad indeed. Taught as they were by Jehovah himself in lessons illustrated by miracles, which came to them daily in the manual from heaven, and the water from the flinty rock, they ought to have learned something, and it was a foul shame that they remained obstinately ignorant, and would not know the ways of God. Wanderers in body, they were also wanderers in heart, and the plain providential goodness of their God remained to their blinded minds as great a maze as those twisting paths by which he led them through the wilderness. Are we better than they? Are we not quite as apt to misinterpret the dealings of the Lord? Have we suffered and enjoyed so many things in vain? With many it is even so. Forty years of providential wisdom, yea, and even a longer period of experience, have failed to teach them serenity of assurance, and firmness of reliance. There is ground for much searching of heart concerning this. Many treat unbelief as a minor fault, they even regard it rather as an infirmity than a crime, but the Lord thinketh not so. Faith is Jehovah's due, especially from those who claim to be the people of his pasture, and yet more emphatically from those whose long life has been crowded with evidences of his goodness: unbelief insults one of the dearest attributes of Deity, it does so needlessly and without the slightest ground and in defiance of all-sufficient arguments, weighty with the eloquence of love. Let us in reading this psalm examine ourselves, and lay these things to heart.

11. "*Unto whom I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.*" There can be no rest to an unbelieving heart. If manna and miracles could not satisfy Israel, neither would they have been content with the land which flowed with milk and honey. Canaan was to be the typical resting-place of God, where his ark should abide, and the ordinances of religion should be established; the Lord had for forty years borne with the ill manners of the generation which came out of Egypt, and it was but right that he should resolve to have no more of them. Was it not enough that they had revolted all along that marvellous wilderness march? Should they be allowed to make new Messahs and Meribahs in the Promised Land itself? Jehovah would not have it so. He not only said but swore that into his rest they should not come, and that oath excluded every one of them; their carcases fell in the wilderness. Solemn warning this to all who leave the way of faith for paths of petulant murmuring and mistrust. The rebels of old could not enter in because of unbelief, "let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should even seem to come short of it."

One blessed inference from this psalm must not be forgotten. It is clear that there is a rest of God, and that some must enter into it: but "they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief, there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." The unbelievers could not enter, but "we which have believed do enter into rest." Let us enjoy it, and praise the Lord for it for ever. Ours is the true Sabbatic rest, it is ours to rest from our own works as God did from his. While we do so, let us "come into his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms."

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EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—These six psalms, xcv. to c., form, if I mistake not, one entire prophetic poem, cited by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, under the title of the Introduction of the First Born into the world. Each Psalm has its proper subject, which is some particular branch of the general argument, the establishment of the Messiah's Kingdom. The 95th Psalm asserts Jehovah's Godhead, and his power over all nature, and exhorts his people to serve him. In Psalm 96th all nations are exhorted to join in his service, because he cometh to judge all mankind, Jew and Gentile. In the 97th Psalm, Jehovah reigns over all the world, the idols are deserted, the Just One is glorified. In the 98th Psalm, Jehovah hath done wonders, and wrought deliverance for himself: he hath remembered his mercy towards the house of Israel; he comes to judge the whole world. In the 99th, Jehovah, seated between the cherubim in Zion, the visible Church, reigns over all the world, to be praised for the justice of his government. In the 100th Psalm, all the world is called upon to praise Jehovah the Creator, whose mercy and truth are everlasting.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is twice quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as a warning to the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, in the writer's day, that they should not falter in the faith, and despise God's promises, as their forefathers had done in the wilderness, lest they should fail of entering into his rest; see Heb. iii. 7, where verse 7 of this Psalm is introduced with the words, "As the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice," and see Heb. iv. 7, where it is said, "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying *in David*, To-day." It has by some been inferred from these words that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews ascribes this Psalm to *David.* It may be so. But it seems not improbable that the words "in David" mean simply "the Book of Psalms," the whole being named from the greater part; and that if he had meant that David wrote the Psalm, he would have written, "David spake," or, "the Holy Ghost spake by David," and not as it is written, "as it is said *in David.*"—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 1.—"*O come, let us sing unto the* LORD," etc. The first verse of the Psalm begins the invitation unto praise and exultation. It is a song of three parts, and every part (like Jacob's part of the sheep) brings forth twins; each a double string, as it were, in the music of this praise, finely twisted of two parts into a kind of *discordant concord*, falling into a musical close through a differing yet reconciled diapason. The first couple in this song of praise are *multitude* and *unity*, *concourse* and *concord*: "*O come*," there's *multitude* and *concourse*; "*let us*," there's *unity* and *concord.* The second twisted pair, are *tongue* and *heart*, "*let us sing*," there's the voice and sound; and "*heartily rejoice*," there's the heart and soul. The third and last intertwisted string, or part in the musick, is *might* and *mercy*, (rock or) *strength* and *salvation; God's strength* and *our salvation:* "to the strength (or rock) of our salvation."—*Charles Herle* (1598—1659) *in a* "*Sermon before the House of Lords*," *entitled*, "*David's Song of Three Parts.*"

Verse 1.—"*Come.*" The word "*come*" contains an exhortation, exciting them to join heart and lips in praising God; just as the word is used in Genesis, where the people, exciting and encouraging each other, say, "Come, let us make bricks;" and "Come, let us make a city and a town;" and, in the same chapter, the Lord says, "Come, let us go down, and there confound their tongue."—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 1.—If it be so that one "*come, let us*" goes further than twenty times *go and do*, how careful should such be whom God hath raised to eminence of place that their examples be Jacob's ladders to help men to heaven, not Jeroboam's stumbling-blocks to lie in their way, and make Israel to sin.—*Charles Herle.*

Verse 1.—There is a silent hint here at that human listlessness and distraction

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of cares whereby we are more prompt to run after other things than to devote ourselves seriously to the becoming praises and service of God. Our foot has a greater proclivity to *depart* to the field, the oxen, and the new wife, than to *come* to the sacred courts, Luke xiv. 18, *seq.* See Is. ii. 3, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord."—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 1.—"*Joyful noise.*" The verb הָרִיעַ, signifies to make a loud sound of any sort, either with the voice or with instruments. In the psalms, it generally refers to the mingled din of voices and various instruments, in the Temple service. This wide sense of the word cannot be expressed otherwise in the English language than by a periphrasis.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 1.—"*The rock of our salvation.*" Jesus is the Rock of ages, in which is opened a fountain for sin and uncleanness; the Rock which attends the church in the wilderness, pouring forth the water of life, for her use and comfort; the Rock which is our fortress against every enemy, shadowing and refreshing a weary land.—*George Horne.*

Verse 2.—"*Let us come before his presence.*" Hebrew, *prevent his face*, be there with the first. "*Let us go speedily. . . .* I will go also," Zech. viii. 21. Let praise wait for God in Sion, Ps. lxv. 1.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2 (*second clause*).—"*Let us chant aloud to him the measured lay.*" זְמִרוֹת, I take to be songs, in measured verse, adjusted to the bars of a chaunt.—*S. Horsley.*

Verse 3.—He that hath a mind to praise God, shall not want matter of praise, as they who come before princes do, who for want of true grounds of praise in them, do give them flattering words; "*for the Lord is a great God,*" for power and preeminency, for strength and continuance.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 3.—The Supreme Being has *three* names here: אֵל *El*, יְהוָה *Jehovah*, אֱלֹהִים *Elohim*, and we should apply none of them to *false gods.* The *first* implies his *strength;* the *second*, his *being* and *essence;* the *third*, his *covenant relation* to mankind. In public worship these are the views we should entertain of the Divine Being.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 3.—"*Above all gods.*" When He is called a great *God* and *King* above *all gods*, we may justly imagine that the reference is to the angels who are wont to be introduced absolutely under this name, and to the supreme *Judges* in the land, who also wear this title, as we have it in Ps. lxxxii.—*Venema.*

Verse 4.—"*In his hand.*" The dominion of God is founded upon his preservation of things. "The Lord is a great King above all gods." Why? "*In his hand are the deep places of the earth.*" While his hand holds, his hand hath a dominion over them. He that holds a stone in the air exerciseth a dominion over its natural inclination in hindering it from falling. The creature depends wholly upon God in its preservation; as soon as that divine hand which sustains everything were withdrawn, a languishment and swooning would be the next turn in the creature. He is called Lord, *Adonai*, in regard of his sustentation of all things by his continual influx, the word coming of אוֹן, which signifies a basis or pillar that supports a building. God is the Lord of all, as he is the sustainer of all by his power, as well as the Creator of all by his word.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 4.—

> "In whose hand are the recesses of the earth
> And the treasures of the mountains are his."
>
> —*Thomas J. Conant's Translation.*

Verse 4.—"*In his hand are the deep places of the earth.*" This affords consolation to those, who for the glory of the divine name are cast into prisons and subterraneous caves; because they know, that even there it is not possible

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to be the least separated from the presence of Christ. Wherefore He preserved Joseph when hurled by his brethren into the old pit, and when thrust by his shameless mistress into prison; Jeremiah also when sent down into the dungeon; Daniel among the lions, and his companions in the furnace. So all who cleave to Him with a firm faith, he wonderfully keeps and delivers to this day.—*Solomon Gesner*, 1559—1605.

Verse 4.—"*In his hand are the deep places of the earth.*" As an illustration of the working and presence of the Lord in the mines amid the bowels of the earth we have selected the following:—"The natural disposition of coal in detached portions," says the author of an excellent article in the Edinburgh Review, "is not simply a phenomenon of geology, but it also bears upon natural considerations. It is remarkable that this natural disposition is that which renders the fuel most accessible and most easily mined. Were the coal situated at its normal geological depth, that is, supposing the strata to be all horizontal and undisturbed or upheaved, it would be far below human reach. Were it deposited continuously in one even superficial layer, it would have been too readily, and therefore too quickly, mined, and therefore all the superior qualities would be wrought out, and only the inferior left; but as it now lies it is broken up by geological disturbances into separate portions, each defined and limited in area, each sufficiently accessible to bring it within man's reach and labour, each manageable by mechanical arrangements, and each capable of gradual excavation without being subject to sudden exhaustion. Selfish plundering is partly prevented by natural barriers, and we are warned against reckless waste by the comparative thinness of coal-seams, as well as by the ever augmenting difficulty of working them at increased depths. By the separation of seams one from another, and by varied intervals of waste sandstones and shales, such a measured rate of winning is necessitated as precludes us from entirely robbing posterity of the most valuable mineral fuel, while the fuel itself is preserved from those extended fractures and crumblings and falls, which would certainly be the consequence of largely mining the best bituminous coal, were it aggregated into one vast mass. In fact, by an evident exercise of forethought and benevolence in the Great Author of all our blessings, our invaluable fuel has been stored up for us in deposits the most compendious, the most accessible, yet the least exhaustible, and has been locally distributed into the most convenient situations. Our coal-fields are so many *Bituminous Banks*, in which there is abundance for an adequate currency, but against any sudden run upon them nature has interposed numerous checks; whole reserves of the precious fuel are always locked up in the bank-cellar under the invincible protection of ponderous stone-beds. It is a striking fact, that in this nineteenth century, after so long an inhabitation of the earth by man, if we take the quantities in the broad view of the whole known coal-fields, so little coal has been excavated, and that there remains an abundance for a very remote posterity, even though our own best coal-fields may be then worked out."

But it is not only in these inexhaustible supplies of mineral fuel that we find proofs of divine foresight, all the other treasures of the earth-rind equally convince us of the intimate harmony between its structure and the wants of man. Composed of a wonderful variety of earths and ores, it contains an inexhaustible abundance of all the substances he requires for the attainment of a higher grade of civilisation. It is for his use that iron, copper, lead, silver, tin, marble, gypsum, sulphur, rock-salt, and a variety of other minerals and metals, have been deposited in the veins and crevices, or in the mines and quarries, of the subterranean world. It is for his benefit that, from the decomposition of the solid rocks results that mixture of earths and alkalies, of marl, lime, sand, or chalk, which is most favourable to agriculture.

It is for him, finally, that, filtering through the entrails of the earth, and dissolving salutary substances on their way, the thermal springs gush forth laden with treasures more inestimable than those the miner toils for. Supposing man

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had never been destined to live, we well may ask why all those gifts of nature—useless to all living beings but to him—why those vast coal-fields, those beds of iron ore, those deposits of sulphur, those hygeian fountains, should ever have been created? *Without* him there is no design, no purpose, in their existence; *with* him they are wonderful sources of health or necessary instruments of civilisation and improvement. Thus the geological revolutions of the earth-rind harmoniously point to man as to its future lord; thus, in the life of our planet and that of its inhabitants, we everywhere find proofs of a gigantic unity of plan, embracing unnumbered ages in its development and progress.—*G. Hartwig, in "The Harmonies of Nature,"* 1866.

Verse 4.—"*The deep places of the earth,*" *penetralia terræ*, which are opposed to the heights of the hills, and plainly mean the deepest and most retired parts of the terraqueous globe, which are explorable by the eye of God, and by his only.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 4.—"*The strength of the hills.*" The word translated "*strength*" is plural in Hebrew, and seems properly to mean fatiguing exertions, from which some derive the idea of strength, others that of extreme height, which can only be reached by exhausting effort.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 4.—"*The strength of the hills is his also.*" The reference may be to *the wealth of the hills*, obtained only by *labour* [*Gesenius*], corresponding to the former—"the deep places of the earth," explained as referring to *the mines* [*Mendelssohn*]. Go where man may, with all his toil and searching in the heights or in the depths of the earth, he cannot find a place beyond the range of God's dominion.—*A. R Faussett.*

Verses 4, 5.—"*Hills,*" "*The Sea,*" "*the dry land.*" The relation of areas of land to areas of water exercises a great and essential influence on the distribution of heat, variations of atmospheric pressure, directions of the winds, and that condition of the air with respect to moisture, which is so necessary for the health of vegetation. Nearly three-fourths of the earth's surface is covered with water, but neither the exact height of the atmosphere nor the depth of the ocean are fully determined. Still we know that with every addition to or subtraction from the present bulk of the waters of the ocean, the consequent variation in the form and magnitude of the land would be such, that if the change was considerable, many of the existing harmonies of things would cease. Hence, the inference is, that the magnitude of the sea is one of the conditions to which the structure of all organised creatures is adapted, and on which indeed they depend for well-being. The proportions between land and water are exactly what the world as constituted requires; and the whole mass of earth, sea, and air, must have been balanced with the greatest nicety before even a crocus could stand erect, or a snowdrop or a daffodil bend their heads to the ground. The proportions of land and sea are adjusted to their reciprocal functions. Nothing deduced from modern science is more certain than this.—*Edwin Sidney, in "Conversations on the Bible and Science."*

Verse 5.—"*The sea is his.*" When God himself makes an oration in defence of his sovereignty, Job xxxviii., his chief arguments are drawn from creation: "The Lord is a great King above all gods. The sea is his, and he made it." And so the apostle in his sermon to the Athenians. As he "made the world, and all things therein," he is styled "Lord of heaven and earth," Acts xvii. 24. His dominion also of property stands upon this basis: Ps. lxxxix. 11, "The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them." Upon this title of forming Israel as a creature, or rather as a church, he demands their services to him as their Sovereign. "O Jacob and Israel, thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant, O Israel," Isa. xliv. 21. The sovereignty of God naturally ariseth from the relation of all things to himself as their entire creator, and their natural and inseparable dependence upon him in regard of their being and well-being.—*Stephen Charnock.*

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Verse 5.—"*He made it.*"

The Earth was form'd, but in the womb as yet
Of waters, embryon immature involv'd,
Appear'd not: over all the face of Earth
Main ocean flow'd, not idle; but, with warm
Prolifick humour softening all her globe,
Fermented the great mother to conceive,
Satiate with genial moisture; when God said,
Be gather'd now, ye waters under Heaven
Into one place, and let dry land appear.
Immediately the mountains huge appear
Emergent, and their broad bare backs upheave
Into the clouds; their tops ascend the sky:
So high as heav'd the tumid hills, so low
Down sunk a hollow bottom broad and deep,
Capacious bed of waters.

—*John Milton.*

Verse 6.—You hold it a good rule in worldly business, not to say to your servants, "O come," "arise ye, go ye;" but, *Let us* come, let us go, let us arise. Now shall the children of this world be wiser in their generation than the children of light? Do we commend this course in mundane affairs, and neglect it in religious offices? Assuredly, if our zeal were as great to religion, as our love is towards the world, masters would not come to church (as many do) without their servants, and servants without their masters; parents without their children, and children without their parents; husbands without their wives, and wives without their husbands; but all of us would call one to another, as Esay prophesied (ch. ii. 3): "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths," and as David here practised.—*John Boys.*

Verse 6.—"*Let us worship and bow down.*" To fall upon the ground is a gesture of worship, not only when the worshipper mourns, but when the worshipper rejoiceth. It is said (Matthew ii. 10, 11) that the wise men when they found Christ, "*rejoiced with exceeding great joy,*" and presently, "*they fell down, and worshipped him.*" Neither is this posture peculiar to worship in times or upon occasions of extraordinary joy and sorrow; for the ordinary invitation was, "*O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker.*"—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 6.—"*Let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the* LORD *our maker.*" Not before a crucifix, not before a rotten image, not before a fair picture of a foul saint: these are not *our makers;* we made them, they made not us. Our God, unto whom we must sing, in whom we must rejoice, before whom we must worship, "*is a great King above all gods*": he is no god of lead, no god of bread, no brazen god, no wooden god; we must not fall down and worship our *Lady*, but our *Lord;* not any *martyr*, but our *Maker;* not any *saint*, but our *Saviour:* "*O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.*" *Wherewith:* with voice, "*Let us sing;*" with soul, "*Let us heartily rejoice*"; with hands and knees, "*Let us worship and bow down: let us kneel*"; with all that is within us, with all that is without us; he that made all, must be worshipped with all, especially when we "come before his presence."—*John Boys.*

Verse 6.—"*Bow down.*" That is, so as to touch the floor with the forehead, while the worshipper is prostrate on his hands and knees. See 2 Chron. vii. 3.—*John Fry*, 1842.

Verse 6.—"*Worship,*" "*bow down,*" "*kneel.*" Kimchi distinguishes the several gestures expressed by the different words here used. The first we render "worship," signifies, according to him, the prostration of the whole body on the ground, with the hands and legs stretched out. The second a bowing of the head, with part of the body; and the third a bending of the knees on the ground.—*Samuel Burder.*

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Verse 7.—"*We are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.*" See how elegantly he hath transposed the order of the words, and as it were not given its own attribute to each word; that we may understand these very same to be "*the sheep,*" who are also "*the people.*" He said not, the sheep of his pasture, and the people of his hand; which might be thought more congruous, since the sheep belong to the pasture; but he said, "*the people of his pasture*": the people themselves are sheep. But again, since we have sheep which we buy, not which we create; and he had said above, "*Let us fall down before our Maker*"; it is rightly said, "*the sheep of his hand.*" No man maketh for himself sheep, he may buy them, they may be given, he may find them, he may collect them, lastly he may steal them; make them he cannot. But our Lord made us; therefore "*the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand,*" are the very sheep which he hath deigned by his grace to create unto himself.—*Augustine.*

Verse 7.—"*The sheep of his hand,*" is a fit though figurative expression, the shepherd that feeds, and rules, and leads the *sheep*, doing it by his *hand*, which manageth the rod and staff (Ps. xxiii. 4), by which they are administered. The Jewish Arabs read, *the people of his feeding* or, *flock, and the sheep of his guidance.*—*H. Hammond.*

Verse 7.—"*For we are his people whom he feeds in his pastures, and his sheep whom he leads as by his hand.*" [French Version.] Here is a reason to constrain us to praise God; it is this,—that not only has he created us, but that he also directs us by special providence, as a shepherd governs his flock. Jesus Christ, Divine Shepherd of our souls, who not only feeds us in his pastures, but himself *leads* us *with his hand*, as intelligent sheep. Loving Shepherd, who *feeds* us not only from the pastures of Holy Writ, but even with his own flesh. What subjects of ceaseless adoration for a soul penetrated by these great verities! What a fountain of tears of joy at the sight of such prodigious mercy!—*Quesnel.*

Verse 7.—"*To-day if ye will hear his voice.*" If we put off repentance another day, we have a day more to repent of, and a day less to repent in.—*W. Mason.*

Verse 7.—He that hath promised pardon on our repentance hath not promised to preserve our lives till we repent.—*Francis Quarles.*

Verse 7.—You cannot repent too soon, because you do not know how soon it may be too late.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 7.—"*If ye will hear his voice.*" Oh! what an *if* is here! what a reproach is here to those that hear him not! "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me;" "but ye will not come to me that ye might have life." And yet there is mercy, there is still salvation, if ye will hear that voice. Israel heard it among the thunders of Sinai, "which voice they that heard it entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more;" so terrible was the sight and sound that even Moses said, "I exceedingly quake and fear": and yet they heard too the Lord's still voice of love in the noiseless manna that fell around their tents, and in the gushing waters of the rock that followed them through every march for forty years. Yet the record of Israel's ingratitude runs side by side with the record of God's mercies—"My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me."—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 7.—"*If ye will hear his voice.*" And yet, as S. Bernard tells us, there is no difficulty at all in hearing it; on the contrary, the difficulty is to stop our ears effectually against it, so clear is it in enunciation, so constant in appeal. Yet there are many who do not hear, from divers causes; because they are far off; because they are deaf; because they sleep; because they turn their heads aside; because they stop their ears; because they hurry away to avoid hearing; because they are dead; all of them types of various forms and degrees of unbelief.—*Bernard and Hugo Cardinalis, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 7.—"*If ye will hear his voice.*" These words seem to allude to the

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preceding words, in which we are represented as the *sheep of God's pasture*, and are to be considered as an affectionate call of our heavenly Shepherd to follow and obey him.—*From "Lectures on the Liturgy, from the Commentary of Peter Waldo,"* 1821.

Verses 7, 8.—It will be as difficult, nay, more difficult, to come to Christ to-morrow, than it is to-day: therefore "*to-day hear his voice, and harden not your heart.*" Break the ice now, and by faith venture upon your present duty, wherever it lies; do what you are now called to. You will never know how easy the yoke of Christ is, till it is bound about your necks, nor how light his burden is, till you have taken it up. While you judge of holiness at a distance, as a thing without you and contrary to you, you will never like it. Come a little nearer to it; do but take it in, actually engage in it, and you will find religion carries meat in its mouth; it is of a reviving, nourishing, strengthening nature. It brings that along with it, that enables the soul cheerfully to go through with it.—*Thomas Cole* (1627—1697) *in the "Morning Exercises."*

Verse 8.—"*Harden not your hearts.*" An old man, one day taking a child on his knee, entreated him to seek God *now*—to pray to him, and to love him; when the child, looking up at him, asked, "But why do not *you* seek God?" The old man, deeply affected, answered, "I would, child; but my heart is *hard*—my heart is *hard.*"—*Arvine's Anecdotes.*

Verse 8.—"*Harden not your heart.*"—*Heart* is ascribed to reasonable creatures, to signify sometimes the whole soul, and sometimes the several faculties appertaining to the soul.

1. It is frequently put for the whole soul, and that for the most part when it is set alone; as where it is said, "Serve the Lord with all your heart," 1 Sam. xii. 20.

2. For that principal part of the soul which is called the mind or understanding. "I gave my heart to know wisdom," Eccles. i. 17. In this respect darkness and blindness are attributed to the heart, Eph. iv. 18, Rom. i. 21.

3. For the will: as when heart and soul are joined together, the two essential faculties of the soul are meant, namely, the mind and will: *soul* put for the mind, heart for the will. "Serve the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul," Deut. xi. 13.

4. For the memory. "I have hid thy word in my heart," saith the prophet, Psalm cxix. 11. The memory is that faculty wherein matters are laid up and hid.

5. For the conscience. It is said that "David's heart smote him," that is, his conscience, 1 Sam. xxiv. 5, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. Thus is heart taken, 1 John iii. 20, 21.

6. For the affections: as where it is said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," Matt. xxii. 37. By the *mind* is meant the understanding faculty; by the *soul*, the will; by the *heart*, the affections.

Here in this text the heart is put for the whole soul, even for mind, will, and affections. For blindness of mind, stubbornness of will, and stupidity of affections go together.—*William Gouge.*

Verse 8.—*In "Massah—in Meribah."* Our translators say, "*in the provocation, in the day of temptation.*" But the places were denominated by names taken from the transactions that occurred in them; and the introduction of those names gives more liveliness to the allusion. See to the same effect Ps. lxxxi. 7; where the Bible translation retains the proper name.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 8.—Let us not fail to notice, that while it is *the flock* who speak in verses 1—7, it is *the Shepherd* who takes up their expostulating words, and urges them home himself at verse 8, to the end, using the argument which by the Holy Ghost is addressed to us also in Hebrews iii. There is something very powerful in this expostulation, when connected with the circumstances

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that give rise to it. In themselves, the burst of adoring love, and the full outpouring of affection in verses 1—7 are irresistibly persuasive; but when (verse 8) the voice of the Lord himself is heard (such a voice, using terms of vehement entreaty!) we cannot imagine expostulation carried further. Unbelief alone could resist this voice; blind, malignant unbelief alone could repel *The flock, and then the Shepherd, inviting men now to enter the fold.—Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 9.—"*Your fathers tempted me.*" Though God cannot be tempted with evil he may justly be said to be tempted whenever men, by being dissatisfied with his dealings, virtually ask that he will alter those dealings, and proceed in a way more congenial to their feelings. If you reflect a little, you will hardly fail to perceive, that in a very strict sense, this and the like may be called tempting God. Suppose a man to be discontented with the appointments of providence, suppose him to murmur and to repine at what the Almighty allots him to do or to bear; is he not to be charged with the asking God to change his purposes? And what is this if it is not tempting God, and striving to induce him to swerve from his plans, though every one of those plans has been settled by Infinite Wisdom?

Or again, if any one of us, notwithstanding the multiplied proofs of Divine loving-kindness, doubt or question whether or not God do indeed love him, of what is he guilty, if not of tempting the Lord, seeing that he solicits God to the giving additional evidence, as though there was a deficiency, and challenges him to a fresh demonstration of what he has already abundantly displayed? This would be called tempting amongst men. If a child were to show by his actions that he doubted or disbelieved the affection of his parents, he would be considered as striving to extract from them new proofs, by asking them to evince their love more, though they may already have done as much as in wisdom and in justice they ought to do. And this is clearly tempting them, and that too in the ordinary sense of the term. In short, unbelief of every kind and every degree may be said to tempt God. For not to believe upon the evidence which he has seen fit to give, is to provoke him to give more, offering our possible assent if proof were increased as an inducement to him to go beyond what his wisdom has prescribed. And if in this, and the like sense, God may be tempted, what can be more truly said of the Israelites, than that they tempted God in Massah? . . . . We are perhaps not accustomed to think of unbelief or murmuring as nothing less than a tempting God, and therefore, we do not attach to what is so common, its just degree of heinousness. It is so natural to us to be discontented whenever God's dealings are not just what we like, to forget what has been done for us as soon as our wishes seem thwarted, to be impatient and fretful under every new cross, that we are scarcely conscious of committing a sin, and much less one more than usually aggravated. Yet we cannot be dissatisfied with God's dealings, and not be virtually guilty of tempting God. It may seem a harsh definition of a slight and scarcely avoidable fault, but nevertheless it is a true definition. You cannot mistrust God, and not accuse him of want either of power or of goodness. You cannot repine, no, not even in thought, without virtually telling him that his plans are not the best, nor his dispensations the wisest which he might have appointed in respect of yourselves. So that your fear, or your despondency, or your anxiety, in circumstances of perplexity, or peril, are nothing less than the calling upon God to depart from his fixed course—a suspicion, or rather an assertion that he might proceed in a manner more worthy of himself, and therefore, a challenge to him to alter his dealings if he would prove that he possesses the attributes which he claims. You may not intend thus to accuse or to provoke God whenever you murmur, but your murmuring does all this, and cannot fail to do it. You cannot be dissatisfied without virtually saying that God might order things better; you cannot say that he might order things better without virtually demanding that he change

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his course of acting, and give other proofs of his Infinite perfections.—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 9.—"*Your fathers tempted me.*" There are two ways of interpreting the words which follow. As *tempting God* is nothing else than yielding to a diseased and unwarrantable craving after proof of his power, we may consider the verse as connected throughout, and read, *They tempted me and proved me, although they had already seen my work.* God very justly complains, that they should insist upon new proof, after his power had been already amply testified by undeniable evidences. There is another meaning, however, that may be given to the term "*proved,*"—according to which, the meaning of the passage would run as follows:—Your fathers tempted me in asking where God was, notwithstanding all the benefits I had done them; and they proved me, that is, they had actual experience of what I am, inasmuch as I did not cease to give them open proofs of my presence, and consequently they saw my work. —*John Calvin.*

Verse 9.—"*Proved me,*" put me to the proof of my existence, presence, and power, by requiring me to work, *i.e.* to act in an extraordinary manner. And this desire, unreasonable as it was, I gratified. They not only demanded, but they גַּם־רָאוּ likewise saw "*my work,*" *i.e.* what I could do.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 9.—"*Forty years.*" To understand this passage we must bear in mind the event referred to. The same year in which the people of Israel came forth from Egypt, they were distressed for water at Rephidim, (Ex. xvii. 1;) and the place had two names given to it, Massah and Meribah, because the people tempted God and chided with Moses. The Lord did not swear *then* that they should not enter into the land of Canaan; but this was in the following year, after the return of the spies. (Num. xiv. 20—38.) And God said then that they had tempted him "ten times"; that is, during the short time since their deliverance from Egypt. It was after *ten* temptations that God deprived them of the promised land.

Bearing in mind these facts, we shall be able to see the full force of the passage. The "provocation" or contention, and "temptation" refer clearly to the latter instance, as recorded in Numb. xiv., because it was then that God sware that the people should not enter into his rest. The people's conduct was alike in both instances.

To connect "forty years" with grieved, was the work of the Punctuists, and this mistake the Apostle corrected; and it is to be observed that he did not follow in this instance the *Septuagint*, in which the words are arranged as divided by the Masorites. Such a rendering as would correspond with the Hebrew is as follows,—

"To-day when ye hear his voice,
8. Harden not your hearts as in the provocation,
In the day of temptation in the wilderness.
9. When your fathers tempted me, they proved me
And saw my works forty years:
10. I was therefore offended with that generation and said,
Always do they go astray in heart,
And they have not known my ways;
11. So that I sware in my wrath,
'They shall by no means enter into my rest.'"

The meaning of the ninth verse is, that when the children of Israel tempted God, they proved him, *i.e.*, found out by bitter experience how great his displeasure was, and saw his works or his dealings with them forty years. He retained them in the wilderness during that period until the death of all who disbelieved his word at the return of the spies; he gave them this proof of his displeasure.—*John Owen, of Thrussington*, 1853.

Verse 10.—O the desperate presumption of man, that he should offend his Maker "*forty years*"! O the patience and longsuffering of his Maker, that he should allow him forty years to offend in! Sin begins in the "*heart,*" by its

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desires *wandering* and going astray after forbidden objects; whence follows inattention to the "*ways*" of God, to his dispensations, and our own duty. Lust in the heart, like vapour in the stomach, soon affects the head, and clouds the understanding.—*George Horne.*

Verse 10.—"*Forty Years.*" It is curious to know that the ancient Jews believed that "the days of the Messiah were to be forty years." Thus Tanchuma, F. 79, 4. "Quamdiu durant anni Messiæ? R. Akiba dixit, xl annos, quemadmodum Israelitæ per tot annos in deserto fuerunt." It is remarkable, that in forty years after the ascension, the whole Jewish nation were cut off equally as they who fell in the wilderness.—*John Brown, in "An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews."* 1862.

Verse 10.—"*Was I grieved.*" The word is a strong word, expressive of *loathing* and *disgust.*—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Verse 10.—"*This generation.*" The word דּוֹר, *dor*, signifies an age, or the allotted term of human life; and it is here applied to the men of an age, as if the psalmist had said, that the Israelites whom God had delivered were incorrigible, during the whole period of their lives.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 10.—"*It is a people that do err in their heart.*" We may observe here, that he does not simply say, This people errs. What mortal is there that does not err? Or where is there a multitude of mortals, exposed to no errors? But he adds, "*In their heart.*" Every error therefore is not blamed here, but the error of their heart is fastened upon. It is to be noted, therefore, that there is a twofold kind of error:

1. One is of the intellect, by which we go astray through ignorance. In this kind of erring Paul erred when he persecuted the Church of Christ; the Sadducees erred, not knowing the Scriptures, Matt. xxii.; and to this day many in the Church go astray, endowed with zeal for God, but destitute of a true knowledge of Him.

2. The other kind of erring is of the heart and affections, by which men go astray, not through ignorance, but through corruption and perversity of heart. This error of heart is a mind averse to God, and alienated from the will and way of God, which is elsewhere thus described in the case of this very people: "And their heart was not right with Him."—*Musculus.*

Verse 10.—"*It is a people that do err in their heart.*" *To err in heart* may mean either to err in judgment, or in disposition, intention: for the Hebrew לֵבָב, and after it the Greek καρδία, means either *animus, judicium*, or, *mens, cogitatio, desiderium.* I understand καρδία here, as used according to the Hebrew idiom (in which it is often pleonastic, at least it seems so to us,) so that the phrase imports simply, *They always err*, i.e. they are continually departing from the right way.—*Moses Stuart.*

Verse 10.—"*Err in their heart.*" He had called them sheep, and now he notes their wandering propensity, and their incapacity for being led: for the footsteps of their Shepherd they did not know, much less follow.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 10.—"*They have not known my ways*"; that is, they have not regarded my ways, have not allowed of them, or loved them; for otherwise they were not ignorant of them; they heard his words, and *saw his works.*—*David Dickson.*

Verse 10.—"*They have not known my ways.*" This ungrateful people did not approve of God's ways—they did not enter into his designs—they did not conform to his commands—they paid no attention to his miracles—and did not acknowledge the benefits which they received from his hands.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 10.—"*A people that do err in their heart,*" *&c.* These words are not to be found in Numb. xiv.; but the inspired Psalmist expresses the sense of what Jehovah said on that occasion. "*They do always err in their heart,*" [Heb. iii. 10]. They are radically and habitually evil. "*They have not known my ways.*" God's "*ways*" may mean either his dispensations or his precepts. The Israelites did not rightly understand the former, and they obstinately refused to acquire a practical knowledge—the only truly valuable species of

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knowledge—of the latter. The reference is probably to God's mode of dealing: Rom. xi. 33; Deut. iv. 32, viii. 2, xxix. 2—4. Such a people deserved severe punishment, and they received it. "*So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.*" The original words in the Hebrew are, "*If they shall enter into my rest.*" This elliptical mode of expressing oaths is common in the Old Testament: Deut. i. 35; 1 Sam. iii. 14; Ps. lxxxix. 35; Isai. lxii. 8. This awful oath is recorded in the 14th chapter of Numbers: "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: but my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it. (Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley.) To-morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea. And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: your carcases shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me." The words of the oath seem here borrowed from the account in Deut. i. 35. There are many threatenings of God which have a tacit condition implied in them; but when God interposes his oath, the sentence is irreversible.

The curse was not causeless, and it did come. We have an account of its actual fulfilment, Numb. xxvi., 64, 65. The "rest" from which they were excluded was the land of Canaan. Their lives were spent in wandering. It is termed "God's rest," as there he was to finish his work of bringing Israel into the land promised to their fathers, and fix the symbol of his presence in the midst of them,—dwelling in that land in which his people were to rest from their wanderings, and to dwell in safety under his protection. It is *His* rest, as of His preparing, Deut. xii. 9. It is *His* rest—rest like His, rest along with Him. We are by no means warranted to conclude that all who died in the wilderness came short of everlasting happiness. It is to be feared many of them, most of them, did; but the curse denounced on them went only to their exclusion from the earthly Canaan.—*John Brown.*

Verses 10, 11.—"*And said.*" Mark the gradation, first grief or *disgust* with those who *erred* made him *say;* then *anger* felt more heavily against those who did not *believe* made him *swear.* The people had been called sheep in verse 7, to sheep the highest good is rest, but into this rest they were never to come, for they had not known or delighted in the ways in which the good Shepherd desired to lead them.—*John Albert Bengel.*

Verse 11.—The word *swearing* is very significant, and seems to import these two things. 1st. The certainty of the sentence here pronounced. Every word of God both is, and must be truth; but ratified by an oath, it is truth with an advantage. It is signed irrevocable. This fixes it like the laws of the Medes and Persians, beyond all possibility of alteration and makes God's word, like his very nature, unchangeable. 2ndly. It imports the terror of the sentence. If the children of Israel could say, "Let not God speak to us, lest we die, what would they have said had God then sworn against them? It is terrible to hear an oath from the mouth but of a poor mortal, but from the mouth of an omnipotent God, it does not only terrify. but confound. An oath from God is truth delivered in anger; truth, as I may so speak, with a vengeance. When God speaks, it is the creature's duty to hear; but when he swears, to tremble.—*Robert South.*

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Verse 11.—"*That they should not enter into my rest.*" There is something unusual and abrupt in the conclusion of this psalm, without any cheering prospect to relieve the threatening. This may be best explained by assuming, that it was not meant to stand alone, but to form one of a series.—*J. A. Alexander.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—An invitation to praise the Lord. I. A favourite method of worship—"let us sing." II. A fitting state of mind for singing—joyful gratitude. III. A fitting subject to excite both gladness and thankfulness—the rock of our salvation.

Verse 1.—"*The rock of our salvation.*" Expressive imagery. Rock of shelter, support, indwelling, and supply—illustrate this last by the water flowing from the rock in the wilderness.

Verse 2.—I. What is meant by coming before his presence? Certainly not the holiness of places, etc. II. What offering is most appropriate when we come into his presence?

Verse 3.—I. The greatness of God as god. He is to be conceived of as great in goodness, power, glory, etc. II. His dominion over all other powers in heaven or earth. III. The worship which is consequently due to him.

Verses 4, 5.—The universality of the divine government. I. In all parts of the globe. II. In all providences. III. In every phase of moral condition. Or, Things deep, or high, dark or perilous are in his hand; circumstances shifting, terrible, overwhelming as the sea, are under his control as much as the comfortable terra firma of peace and prosperity.

Verse 6.—A true conception of God begets—I. A disposition to worship. II. Mutual incitement to worship. III. Profound reverence in worship. IV. Overwhelming sense of God's presence in worship.—*C. A. Davis.*

Verses 6, 7.—God is to be worshipped—I. As our Creator—"our maker." II. As our Redeemer, "the people," etc. III. As our Preserver, "the sheep," etc.—*George Rogers.*

Verse 7.—The entreaty of the Holy Ghost. I. The special voice—"the Holy Ghost saith"—1. In Scripture. 2. In the hearts of his people. 3. In the awakened. 4. By his deeds of grace. II. A special duty, "hear his voice," instructing, commanding, inviting, promising, threatening. III. A special time—"to-day." While God speaks, after so long a time, in the day of grace, now, in your present state. IV. The special danger—"harden not your hearts," by indifference, unbelief, asking for signs, presumption, worldly pleasures, etc.

Verse 7.—Sinners entreated to hear God's voice. "Hear his voice," because—I. Life is short and uncertain; II. You cannot properly or lawfully promise to give what is not your own; III. If you defer, though but till to-morrow, you must harden your hearts; IV. There is great reason to fear that, if you defer it to-day, you will never commence; V. After a time God ceases to strive with sinners; VI. There is nothing irksome or disagreeable in a religious life, that you should wish to defer its commencement.—*Edward Payson.*

Verse 7.—The Difference of Times with respect to Religion.—Upon a spiritual account there is great difference of time. To make this out, I will shew you, I. That *sooner* and *later* are not alike, in respect of eternity. II. That *times of ignorance* and of *knowledge* are not alike. III. That *before* and *after voluntary commission of known iniquity*, are not alike. IV. That *before* and *after contracted naughty habits*, are not alike. V. That the time of *God's gracious and particular visitation* and the time when God *withdraws* his gracious presence and assistance, are not alike. VI. The flourishing time of our *health*

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and strength, and the hour of *sickness*, *weakness*, and approach of *death*, are not alike. VII. Now and hereafter, present and future, *this world* and *the world to come*, are not alike.—*Benjamin Whichcot.*

Verse 7.—This supposition, "*If ye will hear*," and the consequence inferred thereupon, "*harden not your hearts*," doth evidently demonstrate that a right hearing will prevent hardness of heart; especially hearing of Christ's voice, that is, the gospel. It is the gospel that maketh and keepeth a soft heart.—*William Gouge.*

Verses 8—11.—I. Israel's fearful experiment in tempting God. II. The awful result. III. Let it not be tried again.—*C. A. Davis.*

Verse 10.—The error and the ignorance which are fatal.

Verse 11.—The fatal moment of the giving up of a soul, how it may be hastened, what are the signs of it, and what are the terrible results.

Verses 10, 11.—The kindling, increasing, and full force of divine anger, and its dreadful results.

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PSALM XCVI.

SUBJECT.—*This Psalm is evidently taken from that sacred song which was composed by David at the time when "the ark of God was set in the midst of the tent which David had prepared for it, and they offered burnt sacrifices and peace offerings before God." See the sixteenth chapter of the first book of the Chronicles. The former part of that sacred song was probably omitted in this place because it referred to Israel, and the design of the Holy Ghost in this psalm was to give forth a song for the Gentiles, a triumphant hymn wherewith to celebrate the conversion of the nations to Jehovah in gospel times. It follows fitly upon the last Psalm, which describes the obstinacy of Israel, and the consequent taking of the gospel from them that it might be preached among the nations who would receive it, and ... due time be fully won to Christ by its power. It thus makes a pair with the Ninety-fifth Psalm. It is a grand* MISSIONARY HYMN, *and it is a wonder that Jews can read it and yet remain exclusive. If blindness in part had not happened unto Israel, they might have seen long ago, and would now see, that their God always had designs of love for all the families of men, and never intended that his grace and his covenant should relate only to the seed of Abraham after the flesh. We do not wonder that the large-hearted David rejoiced and danced before the ark, while he saw in vision all the earth turning from idols to the one living and true God. Had Michal, Saul's daughter, only been able to enter into his delight, she would not have reproached him, and if the Jews at this day could only be enlarged in heart to feel sympathy with all mankind, they also would sing for joy at the great prophecy that all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.*

DIVISIONS.—*We will make none, for the song is one and indivisible, a garment of praise without seam, woven from the top throughout.*

EXPOSITION.

O SING unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth.

2 Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day.

3 Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.

4 For the LORD *is* great, and greatly to be praised: he *is* to be feared above all gods.

5 For all the gods of the nations *are* idols: but the LORD made the heavens.

6 Honour and majesty *are* before him: strength and beauty *are* in his sanctuary.

7 Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength.

8 Give unto the LORD the glory *due unto* his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.

9 O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.

10 Say among the heathen *that* the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously:

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11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.

12 Let the field be joyful, and all that *is* therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice

13 Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

1. "*O sing unto the* LORD *a new song.*" New joys are filling the hearts of men, for the glad tidings of blessing to all people are proclaimed, therefore let them sing a new song. Angels inaugurated the new dispensation with new songs, and shall not we take up the strain? The song is for Jehovah alone, the hymns which chanted the praises of Jupiter and Neptune, Vishnoo and Siva are hushed for ever; Bacchanalian shouts are silenced, lascivious sonnets are no more. Unto the one only God all music is to be dedicated. Mourning is over, and the time of singing of hearts has come. No dismal rites are celebrated, no bloody sacrifices of human beings are presented, no cutting with knives, and outcries of lamentation are presented by deluded votaries. Joy is in the ascendant, and singing has become the universal expression of love, the fitting voice of reverent adoration. Men are made new creatures, and their song is new also. The names of Baalim are no more on their lips, the wanton music of Ashtaroth ceaseth; the foolish ditty and the cruel war-song are alike forgotten; the song is holy, heavenly, pure, and pleasant. The psalmist speaks as if he would lead the strain and be the chief musician, he invites, he incites, he persuades to sacred worship, and cries with all his heart, "O sing unto Jehovah a new song."

"*Sing unto the* LORD, *all the earth.*"—National jealousies are dead; a Jew invites the Gentiles to adore, and joins with them, so that all the earth may lift up one common psalm as with one heart and voice unto Jehovah, who hath visited it with his salvation. No corner of the world is to be discordant, no race of heathen to be dumb. All the earth Jehovah made, and all the earth must sing to him. As the sun shines on all lands, so are all lands to delight in the light of the Sun of Righteousness. *E Pluribus Unum*, out of many one song shall come forth. The multitudinous languages of the sons of Adam, who were scattered at Babel, will blend in the same song when the people are gathered at Zion. Nor men alone, but the earth itself is to praise its Maker. Made subject to vanity for a while by a sad necessity, the creation itself also is to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, so that sea and forest, field and flood, are to be joyful before the Lord. Is this a dream? then let us dream again. Blessed are the eyes which shall see the kingdom, and the ears which shall hear its songs. Hasten thine advent, good Lord! Yea, send forth speedily the rod of thy strength out of Zion, that the nations may bow before the Lord and his Anointed.

2. "*Sing unto the* LORD, *bless his name.*" Thrice is the name of the Lord repeated, and not without meaning. Is it not unto the Three-One Lord that the enlightened nations will sing? Unitarianism is the religion of units; it is too cold to warm the world to worship; the sacred fire of adoration only burns with vehement flame where the Trinity is believed in and beloved. In other ways beside singing, the blessed Lord is to be blessed. His name, his fame, his character, his revealed word and will are to be delighted in, and remembered with perpetual thanksgiving. We may well bless him who so divinely blesses us. At the very mention of his name it is meet to say, "Let him be blessed for ever." "*Shew forth his salvation from day to day.*" The gospel is the clearest revelation of himself, salvation outshines creation and providence; therefore let our praises overflow in that direction. Let us proclaim the glad tidings, and do so continually, never ceasing the blissful testimony. It is

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ever new, ever suitable, ever sure, ever perfect; therefore let us show it forth continually until he come, both by words and deeds, by songs and sermons, by sacred Baptism and by the Holy Supper, by books and by speech, by Sabbath services and week-day worship. Each day brings us deeper experience of our saving God, each day shows us anew how deeply men need his salvation, each day reveals the power of the gospel, each day the Spirit strives with the sons of men; therefore, never pausing, be it ours to tell out the glorious message of free grace. Let those do this who know for themselves what *his* salvation means; they can bear witness that there is salvation in none other, and that in him salvation to the uttermost is to be found. Let them show it forth till the echo flies around the spacious earth, and all the armies of the sky unite to magnify the God who hath displayed his saving health among all people.

3. "*Declare his glory among the heathen.*" His salvation is his glory, the word of the gospel glorifies him; and this should be published far and wide, till the remotest nations of the earth have known it. England has spent much blood and treasure to keep up her own prestige among barbarians; when will she be equally anxious to maintain the honour of her religion, the glory of her Lord? It is to be feared that too often the name of the Lord Jesus has been dishonoured among the heathen by the vices and cruelties of those who call themselves Christians; may this fact excite true believers to greater diligence in causing the gospel to be proclaimed as with a trumpet in all quarters of the habitable globe. "*His wonders among all people.*" The gospel is a mass of wonders, its history is full of wonders, and it is in itself far more marvellous than miracles themselves. In the person of his Son the Lord has displayed wonders of love, wisdom, grace, and power. All glory be unto his name; who can refuse to tell out the story of redeeming grace and dying love? All the nations need to hear of God's marvellous works; and a really living, self-denying church would solemnly resolve that right speedily they all shall hear thereof. The tribes which are dying out are not to be excluded from gospel teaching any more than the great growing families which, like the fat kine of Pharaoh, are eating up other races: Red Indians as well as Anglo-Saxons are to hear of the wonders of redeeming love. None are too degraded, none too cultured, none too savage, and none too refined.

4. "*For the* LORD *is great and greatly to be praised.*" He is no petty deity, presiding, as the heathen imagined their gods to do, over some one nation, or one department of nature. Jehovah is great in power and dominion, great in mind and act; nothing mean or narrow can be found in him or his acts, in all things he is infinite. Praise should be proportionate to its object, therefore let it be infinite when rendered unto the Lord. We cannot praise him too much, too often, too zealously, too carefully, too joyfully. He deserves that nothing in his worship should be little, but all the honour rendered unto him should be given in largeness of heart, with the utmost zeal for his glory. "*He is to be feared above all gods.*" Other gods have been worshipped at great cost, and with much fervour, by their blinded votaries, but Jehovah should be adored with far greater reverence. Even if the graven images had been gods they could not have borne comparison for an instant with the God of Israel, and therefore his worship, should be far more zealous than any which has been rendered to them. He is to be feared, for there is cause to fear. Dread of other gods is mere superstition, awe of the Lord is pure religion. Holy fear is the beginning of the graces, and yet it is the accompaniment of their highest range. Fear of God is the blush upon the face of holiness enhancing its beauty.

5. "*For all the gods of the nations are idols.*" Mere images of wood and stone, vanities, nothings. "*But the* LORD *made the heavens.*" The reality of his Godhead is proved by his works, and foremost among these the psalmist mentions that matchless piece of architecture which casts its arch over every man's head, whose lamps are the light of all mankind, whose rains and dew fall upon

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the fields of every people, and whence the Lord in voice of thunder is heard speaking to every creature. The idol gods have no existence, but our God is the author of all existences; they are mere earthly vanities, while he is not only heavenly, but made the heavens. This is mentioned as an argument for Jehovah's universal praise. Who can be worshipped but he? Since none can rival him, let him be adored alone.

6. "*Honour and majesty are before him.*" Men can but mimic these things; their pompous pageants are but the pretence of greatness. Honour and majesty are with him and with him alone. In the presence of Jehovah real glory and sovereignty abide, as constant attendants. "*Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.*" In him are combined all that is mighty and lovely, powerful and resplendent. We have seen rugged strength devoid of beauty, we have also seen elegance without strength; the union of the two is greatly to be admired. Do we desire to see the "sublime and beautiful" at one glance? Then we must look to the eternal throne. In the Chronicles we read strength and *gladness;* and the two renderings do not disagree in sense, for in the highest degree in this instance it is true that "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever." Not in outward show or parade of costly robes does the glory of God consist; such things are tricks of state with which the ignorant are dazzled; holiness, justice, wisdom, grace, these are the splendours of Jehovah's courts, these the jewels and the gold, the regalia, and the pomp of the courts of heaven.

7. The first six verses commenced with an exhortation to sing, three times repeated, with the name of the Lord thrice mentioned; here we meet with the expression "*Give unto the* LORD," used in the same triple manner. This is after the manner of those poets whose flaming sonnets have best won the ear of the people, they reiterate choice words till they penetrate the soul and fire the heart. The invocation of the sweet singer is still addressed to all mankind, to whom he speaks as "*Ye kindreds of the people.*" Divided into tribes and families, we are called in our courses and order to appear before him and ascribe to him all honour. "All worship be to God only," is the motto of one of our City companies, and it may well be the motto of all the families upon earth. Family worship is peculiarly pleasing unto him who is the God of all the families of Israel. "*Give unto the* LORD *glory and strength,*" that is to say, recognise the glory and power of Jehovah, and ascribe them unto him in your solemn hymns. Who is glorious but the Lord? Who is strong, save our God? Ye great nations, who count yourselves both famous and mighty, cease your boastings! Ye monarchs, who are styled imperial and puissant, humble yourselves in the dust before the only Potentate. Glory and strength are nowhere to be found, save with the Lord, all others possess but the semblance thereof. Well did Massillon declare, "God alone is great."

8. "*Give unto the* LORD *the glory due unto his name.*" But who can do that to the full? Can all the nations of the earth put together discharge the mighty debt? All conceivable honour is due to our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and Redeemer, and however much of zealous homage we may offer to him, we cannot give him more than his due. If we cannot bring in the full revenue which he justly claims, at least let us not fail from want of honest endeavour. "*Bring an offering, and come into his courts.*" Come with an unbloody sacrifice; atonement for sin having been made, it only remains to bring thank-offerings, and let not these be forgotten. To him who gives us all, we ought gladly to give our grateful tithe. When assembling for public worship we should make a point of bringing with us a contribution to his cause, according to that ancient word, "None of you shall appear before me empty." The time will come when from all ranks and all nations the Lord will receive gifts when they gather together for his worship. O long expected day begin!

9. "*O worship the* LORD *in the beauty of holiness.*" This is the only beauty which he cares for in our public services, and it is one for which no other can compensate. Beauty of architecture and apparel he does not regard; moral and spiritual beauty is that in which his soul delighteth. Worship must not

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be rendered to God in a slovenly, sinful, superficial manner; we must be reverent, sincere, earnest, and pure in heart both in our prayers and praises. Purity is the white linen of the Lord's choristers, righteousness is the comely garment of his priests, holiness is the royal apparel of his servitors. "*Fear before him, all the earth.*" "Tremble" is the word in the original, and it expresses the profoundest awe, just as the word "worship" does, which would be more accurately translated by "bow down." Even the bodily frame would be moved to trembling and prostration if men were thoroughly conscious of the power and glory of Jehovah. Men of the world ridiculed "the Quakers" for trembling when under the power of the Holy Spirit; had they been able to discern the majesty of the Eternal they would have quaked also. There is a sacred trembling which is quite consistent with joy, the heart may even quiver with an awful excess of delight. The sight of the King in his beauty caused no alarm to John in Patmos, and yet it made him fall at his feet as dead. Oh, to behold him and worship him with prostrate awe and sacred fear!

10. "*Say among the heathen that the* LORD *reigneth.*" This is the gladdest news which can be carried to them,—the Lord Jehovah, in the person of his Son has assumed the throne, and taken to himself his great power. Tell this out among the heathen, and let the heathen themselves, being converted, repeat the same rejoicingly. The dominion of Jehovah Jesus is not irksome, his rule is fraught with untold blessings, his yoke is easy, and his burden is light. "*The world also shall be established that it shall not be moved.*" Society is safe where God is king, no revolutions shall convulse his empire, no invasions shall disturb his kingdom. A settled government is essential to national prosperity, the reign of the god of truth and righteousness will promote this to the highest degree. Sin has shaken the world, the reign of Jesus will set it fast again upon sure foundations. "*He shall judge the people righteously.*" This is the best method for establishing society on a secure basis, and this is the greatest source of joy to oppressed nations. Iniquity makes the dynasties of tyrants fall, equity causes the throne of Jesus to stand. He will impartially rule over Jew and Gentile, prince and peasant, and this will bring happiness to those who are now the victims of the despot's arbitrary will.

11. "*Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad.*" Above and below let the joy be manifested. Let the angels who have stood in amaze at the wickedness of men, now rejoice over their repentance and restoration to favour, and let men themselves express their pleasure in seeing their true prince set upon his throne. The book of creation has two covers, and on each of these let the glory of the Lord be emblazoned in letters of joy. "*Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.*" Let it be no more a troubled sea, wailing over shipwrecked mariners, and rehearsing the griefs of widows and orphans, but let it adopt a cheerful note, and rejoice in the kingdom of the Lord. Let it thunder out the name of the Lord when its tides are at its full, and let all its teeming life express the utmost joy because the Lord reigneth even in the depth of the sea. In common with the rest of the creation, the sea has groaned and travailed until now; is not the time close at hand in which its hollow murmur shall be exchanged for an outburst of joy? Will not every billow soon flash forth the praises of him who once trod the sea?

> "Waft, waft, ye winds, his story!
> And you, ye waters, roll,
> Till, like a sea of glory,
> It spreads from pole to pole."

12. "*Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein.*" Let the cultivated plains praise the Lord. Peace enables their owners to plough and sow and reap, without fear of the rapine of invaders, and therefore in glad notes they applaud him whose empire is peace. Both men, and creatures that graze the plain, and the crops themselves are represented as swelling the praises of Jehovah, and the figure is both bold and warranted, for the day shall come when every

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inhabited rood of ground shall yield its song, and every farmstead shall contain a church. "*Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice.*" He does not say, let them rejoice, but they shall do so. The faith of the psalmist turns itself from the expression of desire to the fully assured prediction of the event. Groves have in old times stood shuddering at the horrid orgies which have been performed within their shade, the time shall come when they shall sing for joy because of the holy worship, the sounds of which they shall hear. The bush is the stronghold of savage men and robbers, but it shall be sanctified to retirement and devotion. Perhaps the psalmist was thinking of the birds; so Keble must have supposed, for he versifies the passage thus—

> "Field exults and meadow fair,
> With each bud and blossom there,
> In the lonely woodlands now
> Chants aloud each rusting bough."

13. "*Before the* LORD: *for he cometh.*" Even now he is near, his advent should, therefore, be the cause of immediate rejoicing: already are we in his presence, let us worship him with delight. "*For he cometh to judge the earth,*" to rule it with discretion; not to tax it, and control it by force, as kings often do, but to preside as magistrates do whose business it is to see justice carried out between man and man. All the world will be under the jurisdiction of this great Judge, and before his bar all will be summoned to appear. At this moment he is on the road, and the hour of his coming draweth nigh. His great assize is proclaimed. Hear ye not the trumpets? His foot is on the threshold. "*He shall judge the world with righteousness.*" His essential rectitude will determine all causes and cases, there will be no bribery and corruption there, neither can error or failure be found in his decisions. "*And the people with his truth,*" or rather "the nations in faithfulness." Honesty, veracity, integrity, will rule upon his judgment-seat. No nation shall be favoured there, and none be made to suffer through prejudice. The black man shall be tried by the same law as his white master, the aboriginal shall have justice executed for him against his civilised exterminator, the crushed and hunted Bushman shall have space to appeal against the Boer who slaughtered his tribe, and the South Sea Islander shall gain attention to his piteous plaint against the treacherous wretch who kidnapped him from his home. There shall be true judgment given without fear or favour. In all this let the nations be glad, and the universe rejoice.

In closing, let us ourselves join in the song. Since the whole universe is to be clothed with smiles, shall not we be glad? As John Howe observes, "Shall we not partake in this common dutiful joy, and fall into concert with the adoring loyal chorus? Will we cut ourselves off from this gladsome obsequious throng? And what should put a pleasant face and aspect upon the whole world, shall it only leave our faces covered with clouds, and a mournful sadness?

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EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—What has been said of Psalm lxvii. may be fitly applied to the present psalm. We need not hesitate to add that it is a *millennial* anthem. It accords with the condition of the world when Christ shall sit enthroned in the willing loyalty of our race. The nations join in an acclaim of praise to him as their rightful Judge and King. There is a unanimity in the song, as if it ascended from a world purged into a temple of holiness, and whose inhabitants were indeed a royal priesthood, with one heart to make Jesus king, with one voice to sound forth one peal of melody in praise of the name above every name.

Fix the eye for a moment on the precious vision of which we thus catch a glimpse. It holds true to the deepest principles of our nature, that what we contemplate as possible, much more what we anticipate as certain, lends us the very hope and energy conducive to its realisation. On the contrary, despair paralyses effort. Is it on this account that everywhere in prophecy, old and new, there floats before us the ideal of a recovered and rejoicing world, at times transfigured into a loftier scene, the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness? So largely did this thought imbue the prophetic mind, that the language of Paul warms into the animation of poetry, when even "the creature itself," according to his own vivid personification, like some noble bird, drooping under the weight of its chain, with neck outstretched and eyeball distended, is described as looking down into the vista of coming time for its deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God (Rom. viii. 19). He hastens to add, that "we are saved by hope." It is true of the soul individually, we are saved by hope. It is true of our race collectively, if ever a millennium is to dawn upon it, we are saved by such a hope. Our earth may be in ruins meanwhile, blackness on the sky, barrenness on the soil, because sin is everywhere; but a change is promised. What we hope for, we labour for all the more that our hope is no dream of fancy, but has its basis in the science and certainty of absolute truth. "For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." (Isai. lxi. 11.) The tuning of the instrument is sometimes heard before the music comes. The mother teaches her child to lisp a hymn before he comprehends its full scope and meaning. And so here, in this holy psalm, the Jerusalem from above, the mother of us all, trains us to the utterance of a song suitable to seasons of millennial glory, when the Moloch of oppression, the Mammon of our avarice, the Ashtaroth of fiery lust, every erring creed, every false religion, shall have given place to the worship of the one true and living God—to the faith and love of Christ. "Let the peoples praise thee, O God; let all the peoples praise thee."—*W. H. Goold, in "The Mission Hymn of the Hebrew Church: a Sermon."* 1865.

Whole Psalm.—This psalm is entitled in the *Septuagint*, "*A Hymn of David; when the Temple was rebuilt after the Captivity*," and this appears to be a true description of it; for the substance of it is found in 1 Chron. xvi. 23—33, where it is described as having been delivered by David into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, to thank the Lord when the Ark was brought up to Zion. David's psalm here receives a new name, and is called *a new song* (*sir chadash*), because new mercies of God were now to be celebrated; mercies greater than David had ever received, even when he brought the Ark to Zion. They who now sang the old song, which had thus become a new song, identified themselves with David, and identified him with themselves.—*Chr. Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—Subject.—Call to praise, in view of Christ's second advent and glorious reign.—*To apply it.*—Look forward to the glorious day of the

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Lord's coming; and realize its approach that you may prepare for it.—*A. R. C. Dallas.*

Verse 1.—"*O sing unto the* LORD *a new song*," etc. "A *new* song," unknown to you before. Come, all ye nations of the wide earth, who, up to this hour, have been giving your worship to dead gods that were no gods at all; come and give your hearts to the true and only God in this *new* song!—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 1.—"*A new song.*" It must be "*a new canticle*," a beautiful canticle, and elegantly composed; also a canticle for fresh favours; in like manner, a canticle befitting men who have been regenerated, in whom avarice has been supplanted by charity; and finally, a canticle not like that of Moses, or Deborah, or any of the old canticles that could not be sung outside the land of promise, according to Psalm cxxxvii.; "How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land?" but a new canticle that may be sung all over the world; and he, therefore, adds, "*Sing unto the* LORD, *all the earth*," not only Judea, but the whole world.—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 1.—"*New.*" The word is used to describe that which is delightful, exquisite, precious, etc.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 1.—"*New.*" New things are generally most approved, and especially in songs; for Pindar praises old wine and new songs.—*John Cocceius*, 1603—1669.

Verse 1.—"*A new song.*" Our old songs were those of pride, of gluttony, of luxury, in hope of gain, prosperity, or harm to others; our "*new song*" is of praise, reverence, and obedience, and love to God, in newness of life, in the Spirit that quickeneth, no longer in the letter that killeth, but keepeth that new commandment, that we love one another, not with the narrow patriotism and fellow-feeling of a small tribe, or a mere national church, but with a citizenship which embraces *all the whole earth.—Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 1.—"*Sing unto the* LORD." We find it thrice said, *sing unto the Lord*, that we may understand that we are to sing unto Him with mind, and tongue, and deed. For all these things must be joined together, and the life ought to correspond with the mouth and mind. As Abbot Absolom says, *When the speech does not jar with the life, there is sweet harmony.—Le Blanc.*

Verse 1.—"*All the earth.*" It is a *missionary-hymn* for all ages of the church; and it becomes more and more appropriate to our times in proportion as the heathen begin to respond to the call, "Sing unto the Lord a new song," and in proportion as we find in the melancholy condition of the church at home occasion to look with a hopeful eye towards the heathen world.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 2.—"*From day to day.*" Continually; always. It is a fit subject for unceasing praise. Every man should praise God every day—on each returning morning, and on every evening—for the assurance that there is a way of salvation provided for him, and that he may be happy for ever. If we had right feelings, this would be the first thought which would burst upon the mind each morning, irradiating, as with sunbeams, all around us; and it would be the last thought which would linger in the soul as we lie down at night, and close our eyes in slumber—making us grateful, calm, happy, as we sink to rest, for whether we wake or not in this world, we may be for ever happy.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 2.—"*From day to day.*" Other news delights us only at first hearing; but the good news of our redemption is sweet from day to day, *ac si in eodem die redemptio fuisset operata*, saith Kimchi here, as if it were done but to-day. *Tam recens mihi nunc Christus est*, saith Luther, *ac si hac hora fudisset sanguinem*, Christ is now as fresh unto me as if he had shed his blood but this very hour.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 3.—"*Declare.*" The corresponding word is *a book;* and the par-

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ticiple is often rendered a *scribe*, a *writer*. Ps. xlv. 1. The verb is rendered, *tell*, *shew forth*, *declare*. The variety of verbs used in verses 1—3, proves that we are to employ all proper means for making known the Saviour. One of these methods is by writing.—*W. S. Plumer.*

Verse 3.—"*Declare his glory*"—what a glorious person the Messiah is; the brightness of his Father's glory; having all the perfections of Deity in him; how the glory of God appears in him, and in all that he has done; and especially in the work of redemption, in which the glory of divine wisdom, power, justice, truth, and faithfulness, love, grace, and mercy, is richly displayed; say what glory he is advanced unto, having done his work, being highly exalted, set at the right hand of God, and crowned with glory and honour, and what a fulness of grace there is in him, for the supply of his people; and what a glory is on him, which they shall behold to all eternity.—*John Gill.*

Verse 3.—*His glory* shines from every ray of light that reaches us from a thousand stars; it sparkles from the mountain tops that reflect the earliest and retain the last rays of the rising and the setting sun; it spreads over the expanse of the sea, and speaks in the murmur of its restless waves; it girdles the earth with a zone of light, and flings over it an aureole of beauty. In the varied forms of animal tribes; in the relations of our world to other worlds, in the revolutions of planets, in the springing of flowers, in the fall of waters, and in the flight of birds; in the sea, the rivers, and the air; in heights and depths, in wonders and mysteries,—Christ wears the crown, sways the sceptre, and receives from all a tribute to his sovereignty. We cannot augment it; we cannot add one ray of light to the faintness of a distant star nor give wings to an apterous insect, nor change a white hair into black. We can unfold, but not create; we can adore, but not increase; we can recognise the footprints of Deity, but not add to them.—*John Cumming in "From Patmos to Paradise,"* 1873.

Verse 3.—"*Declare his glory among the heathen,*" etc. It is a part of the commission given to the ministers of the gospel, not only to teach their congregations concerning Christ, but also to have a care that they who never did hear of him, may know what he is, what he hath done and suffered, and what good may be had by his mediation. Nothing so glorious to God, nothing so wonderful in itself, as is the salvation of man by Christ; to behold God saving his enemies by the incarnation, sufferings, and obedience of Christ the eternal Son of God: "*Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.*" —*David Dickson.*

Verse 3.—"*Declare his glory.*" It is *his* glory which should be proclaimed, not the learning, ability, and eloquence of the orator who professes to speak for Him; it is his *glory*, the loving beauty, the attractiveness of his gospel, the lavish promises to repentant sinners, the blessedness of heaven, which should be the chief themes of discourse; not threats, menaces, sermons on hell or torment to affright men, and at best make them God's trembling slaves, not his loving friends. The preaching is to be "*unto all people,*" in obscure country districts, amongst unpolished and illiterate congregations, and not to be confined, as fashionable preachers like to confine it, to the cultivated and critical audiences of the capital.—*Hugo, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 3.—"*His glory.*" What he had before called *salvation*, he now names *glory*, and afterwards *wonders*. And since this salvation, whereby the human race is redeemed from eternal death and damnation, is glorious and full of wonders, it is therefore worthy of admiration and praise.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 3.—"*His wonders.*" What a wonderful person he is, for he is God manifest in the flesh; what wonderful love he has shown in his incarnation, obedience, sufferings, and death; what amazing miracles he wrought, and what a wonderful work he performed; the work of our redemption, the wonder of men and angels; declare his wonderful resurrection from the dead, his ascension to heaven, sitting at the right hand of God, and intercession for his people; the wonderful effusion of his Spirit, and the conquests of his grace,

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and the enlargement of his kingdom in the world; as also what wonders will be wrought by him when he appears a second time; how the dead will be raised and all will be judged.—*John Gill.*

Verse 5.—"*For all the gods of the nations are idols.*" *Nothings*, nonentities, a favourite description of idols in Isaiah's later prophecies. See e.g. Isaiah xli. 24, and compare Lev. xix. 4, xxvi. 1, 1 Cor. viii. 4—6, x. 19. A less probable etymology of the Hebrew word makes it a diminutive of (אל) *El*, analogous to *godlings* as an expression of contempt.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 5.—"*The gods of the nations are idols.*" Their Elohim are *elilim.* See 1 Chron. xvi. 26. The word *elilim* occurs in two places in the Psalms, here and xcvii. 7. It is used most frequently by Isaiah, and properly signifies *nothings*, as St. Paul says, "an *idol* is *nothing.*" (1 Cor. viii. 4.)—*Chr. Wordsworth.*

Verse 5.—"*The* LORD *made the heavens.*" Verse 5 is a notandum. What a tribute to astronomy is it that the Lord is so often done homage to as having made the heavens! Let the theology of nature be blended with the theology of conscience—a full recognition of the strength and the glory which shine palpably forth in the wonders of creation, with the spiritual offerings of holy worship and holy service.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 6.—"*Beauty . . . in his sanctuary.*"

> Oh, if so much of beauty doth reveal
> Itself in every vein of life and nature,
> How beautiful must be the Source itself,
> The Ever-Bright One!
>
> —*Esaias Tegner*, 1782—1847.

Verse 6.—"*In his sanctuary.*" That is to say (1) his ark, tabernacle, or temple, as many writers consider. Kimchi, as quoted by Muis, suggests that where joy or beauty is mentioned as being in his temple, it is set in opposition to the perpetual grief of the Philistines when the ark was in their cities. They saw the Lord's strength, but not his beauty. (2) Others refer the word sanctuary to the church of Christ, which, as Munster remarks, is adorned with heavenly ornaments, and was typified by the magnificence of Solomon's temple. Certainly it is in the church that the spiritual power and beauty of the Lord are to be most clearly seen. (3) The passage may refer to heaven, where the divine presence is more peculiarly manifest.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 7—"*Ye kindreds of the people.*" There is a peculiar force, observes an early commentator [Cassiodorus], in this phrase, "*kindreds of the people*," much more than if we had the word "*peoples*" alone; for in every nation there are at all times strangers, aliens, sojourners abiding permanently or for a time, but not reckoned among the natives; while the phrase here includes all such, and provides that none shall be shut out becau e of his origin—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 7.—"*Ye kindreds of the people.*" He calls upon them to come in kindreds or families, in allusion to the Jewish custom of families coming by themselves, on the several festival days to worship in Jerusalem; and the Holy Ghost gives us here to understand that such custom was to serve as a model for Christians, whose families should unite in coming to the church to give glory and honour to God for all the wonderful things he accomplished in the redemption of man; for it was not by our own industry, or by our merits, that we have come to grace, and to be the adopted children of God, but through God's mercy, to whom, therefore, is due all honour and glory.—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 8.—"*Give unto the* LORD *the glory due unto his name.*" It is a debt; and a debt, in equity, must be paid. The honour due to his name is to acknowledge him to be holy, just, true, powerful: "The Lord, the faithful

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God," "good, merciful, long-suffering," etc. Defraud not his name of the least honour.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 8.—"*Give unto the* LORD *the glory due unto his name.*" Is all the glory due unto God's name, and ought it, in strict justice, to have been ascribed unto him by men, ever since man began to exist? How immeasurably great then is the debt which our world has contracted, and under the burden of which it now groans! During every day and every hour which has elapsed since the apostasy of man, this debt has been increasing; for every day and every hour all men ought to have given unto Jehovah the glory which is due to his name. But no man has ever done this fully. And a vast proportion of our race have never done it at all. Now the difference between the tribute which men ought to have paid to God and that which they actually have paid constitutes the debt of which we are speaking. How vast, then, how incalculable is it!—*Edward Payson.*

Verse 8.—"*Give unto the* LORD *the glory due unto his name.*" Every glory will not serve the turn, but such glory as is proper and peculiar for that God we serve. It is a stated rule in Scripture that, *respects to God must be proportioned to the nature of God.* God is a *spirit*, therefore will be worshipped in *spirit and truth.* God is a God of *peace*, therefore lift up pure hands, without *wrath and doubting.* God is a *holy God*, therefore will be *sanctified.* They which worship the sun, among the heathens, they used a flying horse, as a thing most suitable to the swift motion of the sun. Well, then, they that will glorify and honour God with a glory due to his name, must sanctify him as well as honour him. Why? For "God is glorious in holiness," Exod. xv. 11. This is that which God counteth to be his chief excellency, and the glory which he will manifest among the sons of men.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 8.—"*Bring an offering.*" This is language taken from the temple-worship, and means that God is to be worshipped, in the manner which he has prescribed, as a suitable expression of his majesty. The word here rendered "*offering*"—מִנְחָה, *minkhah*—is that which is commonly used to denote a *bloodless* offering, a thank-offering.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 9.—"*In the beauty of holiness,*" or, in the ornament of holiness, alluding to the splendid robes of eastern worshippers.—*W. Wilson.*

Verse 9.—"*The beauty of holiness.*" Shall I call *holiness* an attribute? Is it not rather the glorious combination of all his attributes into one perfect whole? As all his attributes proceed from the absolute, so all again converge and meet in holiness. As from the insufferable white light of the Absolute they all seem to diverge and separate into prismatic hues, so they all seem again to converge and meet and combine in the dazzling white radiance of his holiness. This, therefore, is rather the intense whiteness, purity, clearness, the infinite lustre and splendour of his perfect nature—like a gem without flaw, without stain, and without colour. All of his attributes are glorious, but in this we have a combination of all into a still more glorious whole. It is for this reason that it is so frequently in Scripture associated with the Divine beauty. The poetic nature of the psalmist is exalted to ecstasy in contemplation of the "*beauty of holiness,*" the "*beauty of the Lord.*" Beauty is a combination of elements according to the laws of harmony; the more beautiful the parts or elements, and the more perfect the harmonious combination, the higher the beauty. How high and glorious, therefore, must be the beauty of this attribute which is the perfect combination of all his infinite perfections!

You see, then, why this attribute is awful to us. In the ideal man all the faculties and powers, mental, moral, and bodily, work together in perfect harmony, making sweet music—the image of God is clear and pure in the human heart. But, alas! how far are we from the ideal! In the actual man the purity is stained, the beauty is defaced, the harmony is changed into jarring discord, "like sweet bells jangled out of tune." How it came so, we are not now inquiring. We all feel that it is so. Therefore is this attribute

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so awful to us. It is the awfulness of absolute purity in the presence of impurity; it is the awfulness of perfect beauty in the presence of deformity; it is the awfulness of honour in the presence of dishonour and shame; in one word, it is the awfulness of holiness in the presence of sinfulness. How, then, shall we approach him before whom angels bow and archangels veil their faces --him in whose sight the white radiance of heaven itself is stained with impurity?—*Joseph Le Coute, in "Religion and Science,"* 1874.

Verse 9.—"*The beauty of holiness.*" The religion of the gospel of Christ is "*the beauty of holiness,*" as it concerns its Author, its plan, its fruits. 1st, As it concerns its *Author.* Whatever we can understand as meant by beauty or holiness, we see in the attributes of God, whether we consider them in all their harmony, or contemplate any one of them in particular. . . . 2ndly, As to its plan. Survey the gospel where we will, or regard whatever we can that is revealed concerning it, we find it to be all "*beauty*"; and we cannot call it by a more appropriate name than "*the beauty of holiness.*" 3rdly, As to its *fruits.* There is a holy separation, a beautiful character of holiness, a separation as to character, feelings, and conduct; these are all the various fruits of grace; and so the man becomes beautiful in holiness.—*Legh Richmond,* 1772—1827.

Verse 10.—"*Say among the heathen that the* LORD *reigneth.*" This clause reads in the old Latin version, "Tell it out among the heathen, that the Lord reigneth *from the tree.*" Justin Martyr accuses the Jews, that they have erased the words "a ligno," ἀπὸ ξύλου, which are wanting in the original and in the Septuagint. Mrs. Charles renders the verse thus:—

> "The truth that David learned to sing,
> Its deep fulfilment here attains;
> 'Tell all the earth the Lord is king!'
> Lo, from the cross, a King he reigns!

—*From "Christ in Song. Hymns of Immanuel, with Notes by P. Schaff,"* 1870.

Verse 10.—"*Say among the heathen that the* LORD *reigneth.*" It is not enough to feel *desire;* we must "*say* among the heathen, the Lord reigneth." There is a commandment given us of the LORD to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"—to tell them what Christ hath taught us—to say to them, in fact, "The LORD reigneth." . . . .

We go among the heathen, and say, "the LORD reigneth"—point them to all the various objects in *creation*—to the stars of heaven, to the beauties of vegetation, to the daily occurrences of *providence,* to the body fearfully and wonderfully made, to its continual preservation and supply. We may easily take our text from every thing by which we are surrounded, and say, "The LORD reigneth." But we must not stop here. It is well to have right views of God as the Creator; but it is only as we view him as the God of *Redemption,* that we can praise him "in the beauty of holiness."—*Legh Richmond.*

Verse 10.—"*Say among the heathen that the* LORD *reigneth*" must be the Christian's as it was the Israelite's motto. The earliest preaching of our Saviour and his disciples was the preaching of the gospel of the *kingdom.* It was because *all power was given unto him in heaven and in earth,* that, after his resurrection from the dead, Jesus sent forth his apostles to go and teach all nations. The substance of the apostles' subsequent preaching was, confessedly, the *kingdom* of God.—*J. F. Thrupp.*

Verse 10.—"*Say among the heathen.*" Go, ye that are already become proselytes unto him, and publish everywhere, in all countries, that the Lord [Christ] is the sovereign of the world, who alone can make it happy: for he shall settle those in peace that submit unto his government: and they shall not be so disturbed as they were wont with wars and tumults: he shall administer equal justice unto all; and neither suffer the good to be unrewarded, nor the evil to escape unpunished.—*Symon Patrick.*

Verse 10.—"*The world also,*" etc. The natural world shall be established; the standing of the world, and its stability, is owing to the mediation of Christ.

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Sin had given it a shock, and still threatens it; but Christ, as redeemer, upholds all things, and preserves the course of nature. The world of mankind shall be established, shall be preserved, till all that belong to the election of grace are called in, though a guilty, provoking world. The Christian religion, as far as it is embraced, shall establish states and kingdoms, and preserve good order among men. The church in the world shall be established, that it cannot be moved, for it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it; it is a "kingdom that cannot be shaken."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 10.—"*It shall not be moved.*" When we learn from the records of geology, as they are inscribed upon the rocks, how numerous and thorough have been the revolutions of the surface and the crust of the globe in past ages; how often and how long the present dry land has been alternately above and beneath the ocean; how frequently the crust of the globe has been fractured, bent, and dislocated; now lifted upward, and now thrown downward, and now folded by lateral pressure; how frequently melted matter has been forced through its strata and through its fissures to the surface; in short, how every particle of the accessible portions of the globe has undergone entire metamorphoses; and especially when we recollect what strong evidence there is that oceans of liquid matter exist beneath the solid crust, and that probably the whole interior of the earth is in that condition, with expansive energy sufficient to rend the globe into fragments; when we review all these facts, we cannot but feel that the condition of the surface of the globe must be one of great insecurity and liability to change. But it is not so. On the contrary, the present state of the globe is one of permanent uniformity and entire security, except those comparatively slight catastrophes which result from earthquakes, volcanoes, and local deluges. Even the climate has experienced no general change within historic times, and the profound mathematical researches of Baron Fourier have demonstrated that, even though the internal parts of the globe are in an incandescent state, beneath a crust thirty or forty miles, the temperature of the surface has long since ceased to be affected by the melted central mass; that it is not now more than one seventeenth of a degree higher than it would be if the interior were ice; and that hundreds of thousands of years will not see it lowered, from this cause, more than the seventeenth part of a degree. And as to the apprehension that the entire crust of the globe may be broken through, and fall into the melted matter beneath, just reflect what solidity and strength there must be in a mass of hard rock from fifty to one hundred miles in thickness, and your fears of such a catastrophe will probably vanish.

Now, such a uniformity of climate and security from general ruin are essential to the comfort and existence of animal nature. But it must have required infinite wisdom and benevolence so to arrange and balance the mighty elements of change and ruin which exist in the earth, that they should hold one another in check, and make the world a quiet, unchanged, and secure dwelling-place for so many thousands of years. Surely that wisdom must have been guided by infinite benevolence.—*Edward Hitchcock, in "The Religion of Geology,"* 1851.

Verse 11.—"*Let the heavens rejoice.*" As the whole creation, both animate and inanimate, has groaned beneath the weight of the curse, so shall the whole creation partake of the great deliverance.—"*The Speaker's Commentary,*" 1873.

Verse 11.—"*Let the sea roar.*"—

> Thou paragon of elemental powers,
> Mystery of waters—never-slumbering sea!
> Impassioned orator with lips sublime,
> Whose waves are arguments which prove a God!

Robert Montgomery, 1807—1855.

Verses 11, 12.—God will graciously accept the holy joys and praises of all the hearty well-wishers to the kingdom of Christ, be their capacity never so mean. "*The sea*" can but "*roar,*" and how "*the trees of the wood*" can shew that they

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"*rejoice*," I know not; but "he that searcheth the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit," and understands the language, the broken language of the weakest.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 11—13.—These verses are full of comprehensive beauty and power. They present the gathering together of everything under the confessed dominion of the reigning Christ. Things in heaven, as well as things on earth, rejoice together in the acknowledged blessing of the Lord of peace. The psalm is throughout a very sweet strain of millennial prophecy.—*Arthur Pridham.*

Verses 11—13.—Nothing can excel that noble exultation of universal nature in the 96th Psalm, which has been so often commended, where the whole animate and inanimate creation unite in the praises of their Maker. Poetry here seems to assume the highest tone of triumph and exultation, and to revel, if I may so express myself, in all the extravagance of joy.—*Robert Lowth.*

Verses 11—13.—Although there are some who by *heaven* understand *angels;* by the *earth*, *men;* by the *sea*, *troublesome spirits;* by *trees* and *fields*, the *Gentiles* who were to believe, yet this need not be thought strange, because such *prosopopœias* are frequent in Scripture.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 12.—"*Let the fields be joyful*," etc. Let the husbandmen, and the shepherds, and all that dwell in the fields leap for joy; and the woodmen and foresters shout for joy, to see the happy day approaching; when all the idols that are worshipped there shall be thrown down together with their groves.—*Symon Patrick.*

Verse 12.—"*Rejoice.*" The verb רָנַן expresses the vibratory motion, either of a dancer's feet, or of a singer's lip.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 12.—"*The trees of the wood.*"

> His praise, ye winds, that from four quarters blow,
> Breathe soft or loud; and wave your tops, ye Pines,
> With every plant, in sign of worship wave.
>
> *John Milton.*

Verses 12, 13.—"*He cometh*," etc.

> It chanced upon the merry, merry Christmas eve,
> I went sighing past the church across the moorland dreary—
> "Oh! never sin and want and woe this earth will leave,
> And the bells but mock the wailing round, they sing so cheery.
> How long, O Lord! how long before thou come again?
> Still in cellar, and in garret, and on moorland dreary
> The orphans moan, and widows weep, and poor men toil in vain,
> Till earth is sick of hope deferred, though Christmas bells be cheery."
>
> Then arose a joyous clamour from the wild fowl on the mere,
> Beneath the stars, across the snow, like clear bells ringing.
> And a voice within cried, "Listen! Christmas carols even here!
> Though thou be dumb, yet o'er their work the stars and snows are singing.
> Blind! I live, I love, I reign: and all the nations through
> With the thunder of my judgments even now are ringing;
> Do thou fulfil thy work but as you wild fowl do,
> Thou wilt heed no less the wailing, yet hear through it angels singing."
>
> *Charles Kingsley*, 1858.

Verse 13.—"*For he cometh, for he cometh.*" Because the thing was hard to be believed, the Prophet asserts twice that God should come, that he should be Judge and King, and Governor of all.—*Martinus Bucerus* in *Expos. Ecclesiast.*

Verse 13.—"*He cometh.*" Not יָבוֹא, "*He shall come;*" but בָּא לִשְׁפֹּט, "*He cometh;*" to show how near the time is. It is almost day-break, and the court is ready to sit: "The Judge standeth at the door," James v. 9.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 13.—"*To judge.*" Vatablus remarks that *to judge* is the word used instead of *to reign*, *judicare pro regere*, because judges in the early days of the Holy Land exercised the power both of kings and magistrates. The Lord

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comes to be to all nations a wiser judge than Samuel, a greater champion than Samson, a mightier deliverer than Gideon.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 13.—"*He cometh to judge the earth.*" That is, to put earth in order, to be its Gideon and Samson, to be its *ruler*, to fulfil all that the Book of Judges delineates of a judge's office. It is, as Hengstenberg says, "a gracious judging," not a time of mere adjudication of causes or pronouncing sentences—it is a day of jubilee. It is the happiest day our world has ever seen. Who would not long for it? Who is there that does not pray for it? It is the day of the Judge's glory, as well as of our world's freedom—the day when "*the judgement of this world*" (John xii. 31, and xvi. 11), which his cross began and made sure, is completed by the total suppression of Satan's reign, and the removal of the curse. All this is anticipated here; and so we entitle this Psalm, *The glory due to him who cometh to judge the earth.—Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 13.—"*He cometh to judge the earth,*" etc. In this new song they take up the words of Enoch, the seventh from Adam (Jude xiv.), who preached of the Coming of the Lord to judge the world.—*Chr. Wordsworth.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—The novelties of grace. I. A new salvation. II. Creates a new heart. III. Suggests a new song. IV. Secures new testimonies, and these, V. Produce new converts.

Verses 1—3.—I. The end desired—to see the earth singing unto the Lord, and blessing his name. II. The means suggested—the showing forth his salvation from day to day; declaring his glory, etc. III. The certainty of its accomplishment. The Lord hath said it. "O sing," etc. When he commands earth must obey.—*G. R.*

Verses 1—3.—The progress of zeal. I. The spring of expansive desire, ver. 1. II. The streamlet of practical daily effort, ver. 2. III. The broad river of foreign missions, ver. 3.—*C. D.*

Verses 1—9.—We are to honour God. I. With songs, verses 1, 2.—II. With sermons, verse 3. III. With religious services, verses 7, 8, 9.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—I. Declare among the heathen the glory of God's perfections, that they may acknowledge him as the true God. II. Declare the glory of his salvation, that they may accept him as their only Redeemer. III. Declare the glory of his providence, that they may confide in him as their faithful guardian. IV. Declare the glory of his word, that they may prize it as their chief treasure. V. Declare the glory of his service, that they may choose it as their noblest occupation. VI. Declare the glory of his residence, that they may seek it as their best home.—*William Jackson.*

Verse 3.—I. What the gospel is, "God's glory," "his wonders." II. What shall we do with it—declare it. III. To whom. "Among the heathen," all people.

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—"*His wonders among the people.*" I. The wonders of his Being, to inspire them with awe. II. The wonders of his creation, to fill them with amazement. III. The wonders of his judgments, to restrain them with fear. IV. The wonders of his grace, to allure them with love.—*W. Jackson.*

Verses 4—6.—Missionary sermon. I. Contrast Jehovah of the Bible with gods of human device. II. Decide between divine worship and idolatry. III. Appeal for effort on behalf of idolaters.—*C. D.*

Verse 6.—"*Honour and majesty are before him.*" I. As emanations from him. II. As excellencies ascribed to him. III. As characteristics of what is done by him. IV. As marks of all that dwell near him.—*W. Jackson.*

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Verse 6 (latter clause).—What we may see in God's sanctuary (strength, and beauty). What we may obtain there, Ps. xc. 17 (strength and beauty).—*C. D.*

Verse 8.—Jehovah possesses a nature and character peculiar to himself; he sustains various offices and relations, and he has performed many works which he alone could perform. On all these accounts something is due to him from his creatures. And when we regard him with such affections, and yield him such services, as his nature, character, offices, and works deserve, then we give unto him the glory which is due to his name. I. Let us inquire what is due to Jehovah on account of his nature. II. What is due to Jehovah on account of the character he possesses. III. What is due to God on account of the relations and offices which he sustains—that of a creator, preserver. IV. What is due to Jehovah on account of the works which he has performed, in nature, providence and redemption.—*E. Payson.*

Verse 8.—The object of worship. The nature of worship. The accompaniment of worship (an offering). The place of worship.—*C. D.*

Verse 9 (first clause).—An examination of true and false worship. I. False worship, in the obscurity of ignorance, in the dulness of formalism, in the offensiveness of indulged sin, in the hideousness of hypocrisy. II. True worship, in the beauty of holiness.—*C. D.*

Verse 9.—Holy fear an essential ingredient in true religion.

Verses 10—13.—The reign of righteousness. I. The announcement of a righteous king and judge. II. The joyful reception prepared for him. III. His glorious coming.—*C. D.*

Verses 11, 12.—The sympathy of nature with the work of grace; especially dwelling upon its fuller display in the millennial period.

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PSALM XCVII.

SUBJECT.—*As the last Psalm sung the praises of the Lord in connection with the proclamation of the gospel among the Gentiles, so this appears to foreshadow the mighty working of the Holy Ghost in subduing the colossal systems of error, and casting down the idol gods. Across the sea to maritime regions a voice cries for rejoicing at the reign of Jesus* (verse 1), *the sacred fire descends* (verse 3), *like lightning the gospel flames forth* (verse 4), *difficulties vanish* (verse 5), *and all the nations see the glory of God* (verse 6). *The idols are confounded* (verse 7), *the church rejoices* (verse 8), *the Lord is exalted* (verse 9). *The Psalm closes with an exhortation to holy steadfastness under the persecution which would follow, and bids the saints rejoice that their path is bright, and their reward glorious and certain. Modern critics, always intent upon ascribing the psalms to anybody rather than to David, count themselves successful in dating this song further on than the captivity, because it contains passages similar to those which occur in the later prophets; but we venture to assert that it is quite as probable that the prophets adopted the language of David as that some unknown writer borrowed from them. One psalm in this series is said to be "in David," and we believe that the rest are in the same place, and by the same author. The matter is not important, and we only mention it because it seems to be the pride of certain critics to set up new theories; and there are readers who imagine this to be a sure proof of prodigious learning. We do not believe that their theories are worth the paper they are written upon.*

DIVISION.—*The psalm divides itself into four portions, each containing three verses. The coming of the Lord is described* (1—3); *its effect upon the earth is declared* (4—6); *and then its influence upon the heathen and the people of God. The last part contains both exhortation and encouragement, urging to holiness and inculcating happiness.*

EXPOSITION.

THE LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad *thereof.*

2 Clouds and darkness *are* round about him: righteousness and judgment *are* the habitation of his throne.

3 A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.

1. "*The* LORD *reigneth.*" This is the watchword of the psalm—Jehovah reigns. It is also the essence of the gospel proclamation, and the foundation of the gospel kingdom. Jesus has come, and all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth, therefore men are bidden to yield him their obedient faith. Saints draw comfort from these words, and only rebels cavil at them. "*Let the earth rejoice,*" for there is cause for joy. Other reigns have produced injustice, oppression, bloodshed, terror; the reign of the infinitely gracious Jehovah is the hope of mankind, and when they all yield to it the race will have its paradise restored. The very globe itself may well be glad that its Maker and liege Lord has come to his own, and the whole race of man may also be glad, since to every willing subject Jesus brings untold blessings. "*Let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.*" To the ancient Israelites all places beyond the seas were isles, and the phrase is equivalent to all lands which are reached by ships. It is remarkable, however, that upon actual islands some of the greatest victories of the Cross have been achieved. Our own favoured land is a case in point, and not less so the islands of Polynesia and the kingdom of Madagascar. Islands are very numerous; may they all become Holy Islands, and Isles of Saints, then will they all be Fortunate

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Islands, and true Formosas. Many a land owes its peace to the sea; if it had not been isolated it would have been desolated, and therefore the inhabitants should praise the Lord who has moated them about, and given them a defence more available than bars of brass. Jesus deserves to be Lord of the Isles, and to have his praises sounded along every sea-beaten shore. Amen, so let it be.

2. "*Clouds and darkness are round about him.*" So the Lord revealed himself at Sinai, so must he ever surround his essential Deity when he shows himself to the sons of men, or his excessive glory would destroy them. Every revelation of God must also be an obvelation; there must be a veiling of his infinite splendour if anything is to be seen by finite beings. It is often thus with the Lord in providence; when working out designs of unmingled love he conceals the purpose of his grace that it may be the more clearly discovered at the end. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing." Around the history of his church dark clouds of persecution hover, and an awful gloom at times settles down, still the Lord is there; and though men for a while see not the bright light in the clouds, it bursts forth in due season to the confusion of the adversaries of the gospel. This passage should teach us the impertinence of attempting to pry into the essence of the Godhead, the vanity of all endeavours to understand the mystery of the Trinity in Unity, the arrogance of arraigning the Most High before the bar of human reason, the folly of dictating to the Eternal One the manner in which he should proceed. Wisdom veils her face and adores the mercy which conceals the divine purpose; folly rushes in and perishes, blinded first, and by-and-by consumed by the blaze of glory.

"*Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.*" There he abides, he never departs from strict justice and right, his throne is fixed upon the rock of eternal holiness. Righteousness is his immutable attribute, and judgment marks his every act. What though we cannot see or understand what he doeth, yet we are sure that he will do no wrong to us or any of his creatures. Is not this enough to make us rejoice in him and adore him? Divine sovereignty is never tyrannical. Jehovah is an autocrat, but not a despot. Absolute power is safe in the hands of him who cannot err, or act unrighteously. When the roll of the decrees, and the books of the divine providence shall be opened, no eye shall there discern one word that should be blotted out, one syllable of error, one line of injustice, one letter of unholiness. Of none but the Lord of all can this be said.

3. "*A fire goeth before him.*" Like an advance guard clearing the way. So was it at Sinai, so must it be: the very Being of God is power, consuming all opposition; omnipotence is a devouring flame which "*burneth up his enemies round about.*" God is longsuffering, but when he comes forth to judgment he will make short work with the unrighteous, they will be as chaff before the flame. Reading this verse in reference to the coming of Jesus, and the descent of the Spirit, we are reminded of the tongues of fire, and of the power which attended the gospel, so that all opposition was speedily overcome. Even now where the gospel is preached in faith, and in the power of the Spirit, it burns its own way, irresistibly destroying falsehood, superstition, unbelief, sin, indifference, and hardness of heart. In it the Lord reigneth, and because of it let the earth rejoice.

4 His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled.

5 The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

6 The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory.

4. "*His lightnings enlightened the world.*" In times of tempest the whole of nature is lighted up with a lurid glare, even the light of the sun itself

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seems dim compared with the blaze of lightning. If such are the common lights of nature what must be the glories of the Godhead itself? When God draws aside the curtain for a moment how astonished are the nations, the light compels them to cover their eyes and bow their heads in solemn awe. Jesus in the gospel lights up the earth with such a blaze of truth and grace as was never seen or even imagined before. In apostolic times the word flashed from one end of the heavens to the other, no part of the civilised globe was left unilluminated. "*The earth saw, and trembled.*" In God's presence the solid earth quakes, astonished by his glory it is convulsed with fear. To the advent of our Lord and the setting up of his kingdom among men these words are also most applicable; nothing ever caused such a shaking and commotion as the proclamation of the gospel, nothing was more majestic than its course, it turned the world upside down, levelled the mountains, and filled up the valleys. Jesus came, he saw, he conquered. When the Holy Ghost rested upon his servants their course was like that of a mighty storm, the truth flashed with the force and speed of a thunderbolt, and philosophers and priests, princes and people were utterly confounded, and altogether powerless to withstand it. It shall be so again. Faith even now sets the world on fire, and rocks the nations to and fro.

5. "*The hills melted like wax at the presence of the* LORD." Inanimate nature knows its Creator, and worships him in its own fashion. States and kingdoms which stand out upon the world like mountains are utterly dissolved when he decrees their end. Systems as ancient and firmly-rooted as the hills pass away when he does but look upon them. In the Pentecostal era, and its subsequent age, this was seen on all hands, heathenism yielded at the glance of Jehovah Jesus, and the tyrannies based upon it dissolved like melted wax. "*At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.*" His dominion is universal, and his power is everywhere felt. Men cannot move the hills, with difficulty do they climb them, with incredible toil do they pierce their way through their fastnesses, but it is not so with the Lord, his presence makes a clear pathway, obstacles disappear, a highway is made, and that not by his hand as though it cost him pains, but by his mere presence, for power goes forth from him with a word or a glance. O for the presence of the Lord after this sort with his church at this hour! It is our one and only need. With it the mountains of difficulty would flee away, and all obstacles would disappear. O that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, O Lord.

In the little world of our nature the presence of Jesus in reigning power is as a fire to consume our lusts and melt our souls to obedience. Sometimes we doubt the presence of the Lord within, for he is concealed with clouds, but we are again assured that he is within us when his light shines in and fills us with holy fear, while at the same time the warmth of grace softens us to penitence, resignation and obedience, even as wax becomes soft in the presence of fire.

6. "*The heavens declare his righteousness.*" It is as conspicuous as if written across the skies, both the celestial and the terrestrial globes shine in its light. It is the manner of the inspired poets to picture the whole creation as in sympathy with the glory of God, and indeed it is not *mere* poetry, for a great truth underlies it, the whole creation has been made to groan through man's sin, and it is yet to share in the joy of his restoration. "*And all the people see his glory.*" The glorious gospel became so well known and widely promulgated, that it seemed to be proclaimed by every star, and published by the very skies themselves, therefore all races of men became acquainted with it, and were made to see the exceeding glory of the grace of God which is resplendent therein. May it come to pass ere long that, by a revival of the old missionary ardour, the glad tidings may yet be carried to every tribe of Adam's race, and once again all flesh may see the glory of Jehovah. It must be so, therefore let us rejoice before the Lord.

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7 Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all *ye* gods.

8 Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O LORD.

9 For thou, LORD, *art* high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.

7. "*Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols.*" They shall be so; shame shall cover their faces, they shall blush to think of their former besotted boastings. When a man gravely worships what has been engraved by a man's hand, and puts his trust in a mere nothing and nonentity, he is indeed brutish, and when he is converted from such absurdity, he may well be ashamed. A man who worships an image is but the image of a man, his senses must have left him. He who boasts of an idol makes an idle boast. "*Worship him, all ye gods.*" Bow down yourselves, ye fancied gods. Let Jove do homage to Jehovah, let Thor lay down his hammer at the foot of the cross, and Juggernaut remove his blood-stained car out of the road of Immanuel. If the false gods are thus bidden to worship the coming Lord, how much more shall they adore him who are godlike creatures in heaven, even the angelic spirits? Paul quotes this passage as the voice of God to angels when he sent his Son into the world. All powers are bound to recognise the chief power; since they derive their only rightful authority from the Lord, they should be careful to acknowledge his superiority at all times by the most reverent adoration.

8. "*Zion heard, and was glad.*" While the heathen are confounded the people of God are made to triumph, for they love to see their God exalted. The day shall come when the literal Zion, so long forsaken, shall joy in the common salvation. It did so at the first when the apostles dwelt at Jerusalem, and the good days will come back again. "*And the daughters of Judah rejoiced.*" Each individual believer is glad when he sees false systems broken up and idol gods broken down; the judgments of the Lord afford unalloyed delight to those who worship the true God in spirit and in truth. In the first ages of Christianity the believing Israel rejoiced to see Christ's kingdom victorious among the heathen, and even yet, though for a while turning aside, the daughters of Judah will sympathise in the wide-spread reign of Jehovah their God, through the gospel of his dear Son. As the women of Judah went forth to meet David in the dance, singing his victory over the Philistine, so shall they chant the triumphs of David's son and Lord.

9. "*For thou,* LORD, *art high above all the earth.*" And therefore do we rejoice to see the idols abolished and to see all mankind bending at thy throne. There is but one God, there cannot be another, and he is and ever must be over all. "*Thou art exalted far above all gods.*" As much as ALL is exalted above nothing, and perfection above folly. Jehovah is not alone high over Judea, but over all the earth, nor is he exalted over men only, but over everything that can be called god: the days are on their way when all men shall discern this truth, and shall render unto the Lord the glory which is due alone to him.

10 Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.

11 Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

12 Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

10 "*Ye that love the* LORD, *hate evil.*" For He hates it, his fire consumes it, his lightnings blast it, his presence shakes it out of its place, and his glory

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confounds all the lovers of it. We cannot love God without hating that which he hates. We are not only to avoid evil, and to refuse to countenance it, but we must be in arms against it, and bear towards it a hearty indignation. "*He preserveth the souls of his saints.*" Therefore they need not be afraid of proclaiming war with the party which favours sin. The saints are the safe ones: they have been saved and shall be saved. God keeps those who keep his law. Those who love the Lord shall see his love manifested to them in their preservation from their enemies, and as they keep far from evil so shall evil be kept far from them. "*He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.*" It is not consistent with the glory of his name to give over to the power of his foes those whom his grace has made his friends. He may leave the bodies of his persecuted saints in the hand of the wicked, but not their souls, these are very dear to him, and he preserves them safe in his bosom. This foretells for the church a season of battling with the powers of darkness, but the Lord will preserve it and bring it forth to the light.

11. "*Light is sown for the righteous.*" All along their pathway it is strewn. Their night is almost over, their day is coming, the morning already advancing with rosy steps is sowing the earth with orient pearls. The full harvest of delight is not yet ours, but it is sown for us; it is springing, it will yet appear in fulness. This is only for those who are right before the Lord in his own righteousness, for all others the blackness of darkness is reserved. "*And gladness for the upright in heart.*" Gladness is not only for one righteous man in the singular, but for the whole company of the upright, even as the apostle, after speaking of the crown of life laid up for himself, immediately amended his speech by adding, "and not for me only, but also for all them that love his appearing." The upright ought to be glad, they have cause to be glad, yea and they shall be glad. Those who are right-hearted shall also be glad-hearted. Right leads to light. In the furrows of integrity lie the seeds of happiness, which shall develop into a harvest of bliss. God has lightning for sinners and light for saints. The gospel of Jesus, wherever it goes, sows the whole earth with joy for believers, for these are the men who are righteous before the Lord.

12. "*Rejoice in the* LORD, *ye righteous.*" The psalmist had bidden the earth rejoice, and here he turns to the excellent of the earth and bids them lead the song. If all others fail to praise the Lord, the godly must not. To them God is peculiarly revealed, by them he should be specially adored. "*And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness*"—which is the harmony of all his attributes, the superlative wholeness of his character. This is a terror to the wicked, and a cause of thankfulness to the gracious. To remember that Jehovah is holy is becoming in those who dwell in his courts, to give thanks in consequence of that remembrance is the sure index of their fitness to abide in his presence. In reference to the triumphs of the gospel, this text teaches us to rejoice greatly in its purifying effect; it is the death of sin and the life of virtue. An unholy gospel is no gospel. The holiness of the religion of Jesus is its glory, it is that which makes it glad tidings, since while man is left in his sins no bliss can be his portion. Salvation from sin is the priceless gift of our thrice holy God, therefore let us magnify him for ever and ever. He will fill the world with holiness, and so with happiness, therefore let us glory in his holy name, world without end. Amen.

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EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The two preceding psalms are songs of joy and thanksgiving, in which the gladness of Christ's people is poured forth as they go to meet their triumphant Lord at his second advent, and to bring him back in glory to assume his kingdom. The present psalm, in language sufficiently explicit, describes the completion of this great event, "the Lord reigneth;" Messiah is on his throne, and now the words of the second psalm, verse 6, are fulfilled, "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Sion." Messiah's first act of sovereignty is judgment. Scriptures bearing upon that event are 2 Thess. i. 7; Jude 14; Isa. lxvi. 15. The character of these judgments is given in the psalm: clouds and darkness encircling his throne, where, however, righteousness and mercy dwell; a fire which burns up his enemies round about; lightnings flashing upon the world, the earth trembling, and the hills melting like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. Peter, in his second Epistle, and third chapter, evidently refers to these events as yet future in his day.—*R. H. Ryland.*

Verse 1.—"*The* LORD *reigneth.*" Here's good news, glad tidings: "*The Lord reigneth.*" It cannot be published without *praise*, without *rejoicing*, without *singing*, without *blessing*. We should dishonour this truth if we did not publish it; if we should with silence suppress it; if we should not speak well of it. It is so sweet and comfortable, that it fills the whole world with joy; and calls on every ear, and every tongue, and every heart, to be glad, to rejoice, and to praise God. "*Let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad.*" As though he should say, Let nothing fear but hell: let nothing be disquieted but devils. Let the *lowest*, the *poorest* of the people of God, though but *earth*, yet let them rejoice in this, "*The* LORD *reigneth*" . . .

Here are two things of very sweet consideration, 1. The *reign* of the Lord; and, 2. The *reign* of the Lord *in the saints*. First, This *kingdom* that God is now setting up is his everlasting kingdom. It will not be administered by the weakness of man, but by the power of God; not by the folly of man, but by the judgment of God. God will, in this kingdom, nakedly manifest his own righteousness, his own compassion and pity; his own love, his own peace: he will do all things immediately by his own self. And therefore all the pride and ambition, all the oppression and tyranny, and miscarriages that have been in the government of men, shall be wholly taken away. Pure righteousness and judgment and equity shall be infallibly dispensed; and infinite power, strength, holiness, goodness, and authority shall shine forth nakedly in the face of God; and that shall be the judge of all men. We shall no longer be abused and oppressed by the will of men, by the lusts of men. The poor people shall no longer groan under the burden of men's lusts, nor sweat for the pleasure and contents of men; nor their faces any longer be ground by the hardness of the spirit of men; but they shall be under the protection of God. The great cry now of the people is, "Let's have a King!" Ye shall have one, one that will "reign in righteousness," the LORD himself.

Secondly, And this *reign* of the LORD shall be *in his saints;* according to that in Dan. vii. 27. "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." As this kingdom shall be administered in the glory of God; so also in the sweetness and gentleness of man, by brethren, by friends, by the saints of the Most High. God lifting up himself in the saints will administer this reign; and as he will do it by the saints, so he will do it by the softness and tenderness of the saints; "The kingdom and dominion under the whole earth shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." It's now doing; that ye shall obey none but the Lord; ye shall know no other laws but the law of God; ye shall know no other

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master but Jehovah. He hath made us priests and kings, and we shall reign with him on the earth. This nature of ours, this body of ours, shall reign with Christ, with God, and that upon earth.

"*The Lord reigns.*" The Lord hath served, hath been hitherto much, yea, mostly, "in the form of a servant." It hath been, as it were, the business of the Lord, whilst this world stood, to give supplies to men; to serve men; to give men strength, and wisdom, and riches, and authority, and power, that men might be great and happy, with the goodness of God: and (in this) God hath been *King* too, but in an under way; as saith the Lord, "I have served with your sins" and lusts: now he will no longer *serve*, but *reign;* God will take all the power and authority into his own hands. He will not be any longer under men, but above all men. It's time He should be so; it's reason He should be so; it's just He should be so. Everything now must bow, stoop, and submit to the law, and rule, and will of God. No man shall any longer say, it shall be so, because it is my will to have it so: there shall not be found an heart, or tongue, that shall move against the dominion of the Lord.

Satan hath been a prince; he hath made laws of your captivity and misery; he hath kept you to his task, to do him service. He hath said, *Be angry*, and then you have been full of rage. He hath said, *Be covetous*, and then you have been full of covetousness. He hath said, *Be dark*, and then you have been full of blindness. He hath said, *Be proud*, and then ye have been full of haughtiness. And so he hath, as a monstrous tyrant, tormented the world. The sting of Satan's whips is in your consciences, I know. Your errors and mistakes have been through the kingdom of darkness in you, that you do not know God, or his holy hill. You would come into the enjoyment of God; Satan will not let you: you would know God; he will not suffer you: you would be wise unto salvation; he will not permit you. He hath fettered you with his chains of darkness; he hath captivated your judgments; he hath made you to grind at his mill and to drudge in his service; and hath made you to cry out, "O when will the Lord come!" But now his wicked reign is at an end: what ye had, ye shall want, and what ye want, ye shall have; what hath been shall not be; that which shall be, must be, and cannot choose but be: ye shall have love, because the law of God is love; and ye shall have peace, because the kingdom of God is peace; and ye shall have light, because the inheritance is marvellous light; ye shall have righteousness, because this state is true holiness; ye shall have liberty, settledness, stability, and every good thing in this kingdom of God It's always ill with us while Satan reigns. It's always well with us while God reigns; when our Husband is King we shall have preferment, and honour, and riches, and greatness, and power, and authority, because our God reigns. "*The Lord reigns,*" for us; the Lord takes his kingdom, and it is for us: the Lord hath reigned in himself all this while; now he reigns by us: the Lord counts himself not to have a kingdom, till we have it with him: the Lord thinks himself mean and despised, till we are exalted. He is poor without us. He is weak, while absent from us. He is not himself unless he enjoys us. "Thou art my excellency, my first-born." The power of God is in weakness, till we become mighty. The kingdom of God is in darkness, till we shine forth. The treasures of God were of no worth to him, if we were not his richest jewels.

"*The Lord* doth *reign.*" This is not to be passed by; it's in the present tense. This is the song that we hear and see angels sing. The elders and saints in heaven sing it perpetually; we daily hear it. *Hallelujah, Hallelujah, the Lord reigneth!* There is administered into our hearts and ears *an hallelujah; the Lord reigneth;* indeed every creature speaks it, all in heaven and earth.

"THE LORD *doth reign,*" and saith, "I am upon my throne. I am great; none is great but myself. I am King; I have the sceptre in my hand. I am powerful; none is powerful but I." All the power of men is broken. All the thrones of men are shattered into dust. All the wisdom of men is turned

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into folly. All the strength of men is melted into weakness and water. The meltings and moulderings away of the powers and dignities of the world, speak it aloud, *The* LORD *reigns.—William Sedgwick, in "Some Flashes of Lightnings of the Son of Man,"* 1648.

Verse 1.—"*The* LORD *reigneth.*" He who stood before the judge, he who received the blows, he who was scourged, he who was spit upon, he who was crowned with thorns, he who was struck with fists, he who hung upon the cross, he who as he hung upon the wood was mocked, he who died upon the cross, he who was pierced with the spear, he who was buried, himself arose from the dead. "*The Lord reigneth.*" Let kingdoms rage as much as they can; what can they do to the King of kingdoms, the Lord of all kings, the Creator of all worlds?—*Augustine.*

Verse 1.—"*The* LORD *reigneth.*" I am glad that Christ is Lord of all, for otherwise I should utterly have been out of hope, saith *Miconius* in an epistle to *Calvin*, upon a view of the church's enemies.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"*The* LORD *reigneth; let the earth rejoice.*" Consider the divine government in various views, as legislative, providential, mediatorial, and judicial, and in each of these views the divine government is matter of universal joy.

I. "The Lord reigneth" *upon a throne of legislation*, "let the earth rejoice." He is the one supreme law-giver and is perfectly qualified for that important trust. Nothing tends more to the advantage of civil society than to have good laws established, according to which mankind are to conduct themselves, and according to which their rulers will deal with them. Now the supreme and universal King has enacted and published the best laws for the government of the moral world, and of the human race in particular. Let the earth then rejoice that God has clearly revealed his will to us and not left us in inextricable perplexities about our duty to him and mankind. . . . . Again, "Let the earth rejoice" that these laws are suitably enforced with proper sanctions. The sanctions are such as become a God of infinite wisdom, almighty power, inexorable justice, untainted holiness, and unbounded goodness and grace, and such as are agreeable to the nature of reasonable creatures formed for an immortal duration. Let the earth rejoice that the divine laws reach the inner man, and have power upon the hearts and consciences of men. Human laws can only smooth our external conduct at best, but the heart in the mean time may be disloyal and wicked. Now this defect is supplied by the laws of the King of Heaven, which are spiritual. They require a complete uniformity and self-consistency in us that heart and life may agree, and therefore they are wisely framed to make us entirely good.

II. "The Lord reigneth" *by his providence*, "let the earth rejoice." The providence of God is well described in our shorter catechism, "It is his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions."

"The Lord reigneth" over the kingdoms of the earth, and manages all their affairs according to his sovereign and wise pleasure, and he doth the same for his church. He can reduce confusion into order, make the wrath of man to praise him, and restrain the remainder of it.

III. "The Lord reigneth" *upon a throne of grace!* "let the earth rejoice." It is the mediatorial government of the Messiah which the Psalmist had more immediately in view, and this is the principal cause of joy to the earth and its guilty inhabitants.

IV. And, lastly, the Lord will reign ere long upon *a throne of universal judgment* conspicuous to the assembled universe, "let the earth therefore rejoice, and the multitude of the isles be glad."—*Condensed from a Sermon by Samuel Davies*, 1724—1761.

Verse 1.—"*Let the earth rejoice.*" The earth is called upon to rejoice because the Lord reigneth; and well it may, on the day of its enlargement and final emancipation from evil, which seems to be here set forth—a day of

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judgment, and so also a day of terror and destruction to the enemies of God and goodness—a day when at his presence "the elements shall melt with fervent heat;" but his own righteousness and glory shall be manifested in the sight of all people. Then will the worldly, who serve idols in loving the creature more than the Creator, be confounded and overthrown; but then, too, will the righteous lift up their heads and rejoice because of God's judgments.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 1:—"*The multitude of the isles.*" In Poole's Synopsis we find from the various interpretations of different authors that the word may mean maritime regions, places beyond sea usually reached in ships, and all countries bordering on the ocean.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 1.—"*The isles.*" Figuratively the isles may be taken for all the churches. Why isles? because the waves of all temptations roar around them. But as an isle may be beaten by the waves which on every side dash around it, yet cannot be broken, and rather itself doth break the advancing waves, than by them is broken: so also the churches of God, springing up throughout the world, have suffered the persecutions of the ungodly, who roar around them on every side; and behold the isles stand fixed, and at last the sea is calmed.—*Augustine.*

Verse 1.—When Bulstrode Whitelock was embarked as Cromwell's envoy to Sweden, in 1653, he was much disturbed in mind, as he rested at Harwich the preceding night, which was very stormy, as he thought upon the distracted state of the nation. It happened that a confidential servant slept in an adjacent bed, who, finding that his master could not sleep, at length said:—

"Pray, sir, will you give me leave to ask you a question?"

"Certainly."

"Pray, sir, do you think God governed the world very well before you came into it?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And pray, sir, do you think that He will govern it quite as well when you are gone out of it?"

"Certainly."

"Then pray, sir, excuse me, but do not you think you may trust him to govern it quite as well as long as you live?"

To this question Whitelock had nothing to reply; but turning about, soon fell fast asleep, till he was summoned to embark.—*G. S. Bowes, in "Illustrative Gatherings."* 1862.

Verse 2.—"*Clouds and darkness are round about him.*" The figurative language in the poetical parts of the Old Testament is frequently taken from the historical books, and refers to the facts therein recorded: thus the appearances of God to the saints and patriarchs in old times is the origin of the figure in our text. If you look at the history of these appearances, you will find they were all accompanied with clouds and darkness. The cloud of the Lord went before the children of Israel when they departed from the land of bondage. This cloud had a dark and bright side, and was a symbol of the divine presence. Thus it preceded the people in all their marches, as a pillar of fire by night, and of a cloud by day. When Solomon dedicated the temple, the glory of the Lord filled the house, and the priest could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the house. When God descended upon Mount Sinai, "there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, upon the top of the mount" (Exod. xix. 16, 18, 20). When our Saviour was transfigured before three of his disciples, "a bright cloud overshadowed them," from which proceeded the voice of the Father, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I

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am well pleased; hear ye him." And Peter, who was present there, afterwards referring to the fact, says that the voice proceeded "from the excellent glory." Thus, in all the symbols of the divine presence, there was a mixture of splendour with darkness and obscurity. So it is in the operations of Providence: in a moral and figurative sense, we may say that clouds and darkness surround all the operations of divine power and wisdom.

Clouds are emblems of obscurity; darkness, of distress. The works of God's providence are often obscure and productive of distress to mankind, though righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.—*Robert Hall.*

Verse 2.—"*Clouds and darkness are round about him.*" God doth govern the world *mysteriously.* As there are mysteries in the word, so in the works of God; δυσνόητά, "things hard to be understood," (2 Pet. iii. 16,) many riddles which nonplus and puzzle men of the largest and most piercing intellectuals: "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: but he knoweth the way that I take." Job xxiii. 8—10. God knoweth our ways, and counteth our steps; but the wisest of men do not know all God's ways. His way is frequently in the sea, and his chariots in the clouds; so that he is invisible, not only in his essence, but also in the design and tendence of his operations. Those that behold him with an eye of faith, do not yet see him with an eye of understanding, so as to discern his way, and whither he is going. Paul assures us, "His judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out." Rom. xi. 33. Some of them, indeed, are obvious, plain, and easy; we may upon the first view give a satisfactory account of them; we may read righteousness, equity, mercy, goodness, love, in them, because written in capital letters, and with such beams of light as he that runs may read them. But others of God's ways are dark and obscure, so that they are out of our reach and above our sight. He that goes about in them to trace God, may quickly lose himself. They are like that hand-writing upon the wall, which none of Belshazzar's wise men could read or give the interpretation of (Dan. v. 8). There are *arcana imperii*, "secrets of state and government," which are not fit to be made common. But this may be our comfort:—though God doth not now give any account of his matters, nor is he obliged thereunto, yet he can give a very good and satisfactory account; and one day his people shall be led into the mystery; and, though many things which God doeth they know not now, yet they shall know them afterward; and when they know, they shall approve and admire both the things, and the reason, and the end. They shall then be perfectly reconciled to all providences, and see that all were worthy of God, and that in all he acted θεοπρεπῶς, "as did highly become himself."—*Samuel Slater* (1704) *in* "*The Morning Exercises.*"

Verse 2.—How despicable soever Christ's kingdom may seem to the world, yet it is full of heavenly majesty: "*clouds and darkness are round about him.*" The glory of Christ's kingdom is unsearchable, and hid from the eyes of the world, who cannot take up the things of God, except he reveal himself to them, and do open the eyes of the understanding: "*clouds and darkness are round about him.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 2.—"*Darkness.*" This and the four following verses have a striking resemblance to the awful pomp of the march of God, as described Ps. xviii. 8, 9, and lxviii. 8. All the dread phenomena and meteoric array of nature are in attendance; thunder and lightning, and earthquakes and volcanoes, with streams of melting lava, like streams of melting wax. Yet all is justice and equity, joy, exultation, and glory; and the wicked alone—the adversaries of Jehovah—feel his judgments—the host of idols and their brutish worshippers. —*John Mason Good.*

Verse 2.—"*Righteousness and judgment.*" *Righteousness* is the essential perfection of the Divine Being. It is his nature: if there had been no creatures for him to govern, he would have had an unchangeable and invincible love

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of rectitude. *Judgment* is the application of the principle of righteousness in his government of his creatures and their actions; it is a development of his rectitude in the management of the affairs of his great empire; it is that superintendence over all, whereby the operations of all things are directed, to some vast and important end. Judgment implies measure and equity, in opposition to what is done without rule and consideration. All the divine conduct is equitable, regulated by rectitude, and everything is directed by a judgment that cannot err.—*Robert Hall.*

Verse 2.—"*Righteousness and judgment,*" etc. When the mercy and grace of our heavenly King are to be described, he is likened to the sun shining in a clear firmament, and gladdening universal nature with his beneficent ray. But when we are to conceive an idea of him, as going forth, in justice and judgment, to discomfit and punish his adversaries, the imagery is then borrowed from a troubled sky; he is pictured as surrounded by clouds and darkness; from whence issue lightnings and thunders, storms and tempests, affrighting and confounding the wicked and the impenitent.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 2.—The Lord manageth his kingdom and government with perfect equity. "*Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.*" *Righteousness*, whereby he preserves, saves, and rewards the good; *judgment*, whereby he punishes, confounds, and destroys the wicked: these are "*the habitation of his throne,*" his tribunal, his seat of judicature. These are the basis or foundation, which give unto his throne *rectitudinem et stabilitatem*, "rectitude and establishment." His throne is established in righteousness, and "the sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre:" though there be clouds, yet no blemishes; though darkness, yet no deformities: Ps. xcii. 15. Ever since the creation, all things have been done with that unreprovable exactness, that if the world were to begin again, and the affairs of it to be acted over again, there should not be an alteration in a tittle. All hath been so well, that nothing can be mended. Those dark and obscure passages of Providence, at which good men are startled, and by which all men are posed, are most excellent and curious strokes, and as so many well-placed shades, which commend the work and admirably set off the beauty of Providence.—*Samuel Slater.*

Verse 2.—

Jove's firm decree, tho' wrapt in night,
Beams midst the gloom a constant light;
Man's fate obscure in darkness lies,
Not to be pierc'd by mortal eyes:
The just resolves of his high mind
A glorious consummation find;
Tho' in majestic state enthron'd
Thick clouds and dark enclose him round,
As from the tower of heav'n his eye
Surveys man's bold impiety:
Till his ripe wrath on vengeance bent,
He arms each god for punishment,
And from his high and holy throne
Sends all his awful judgments down.

—*Æschylus* [*R. Potter's translation*, 1808.]

Verse 3.—"*A fire goeth before him.*" Like a marshall or advance guard before a royal presence, or as the javelin men who precede a judge. Fire is the sign both of grace and wrath (Ex. iii. 2; Ps. xviii. 9.) Majesty marches forth in both displays of Deity.—*C. H. S.* from *Poli Synopsis.*

Verse 3.—"*A fire goeth before him.*" That fire which Christ came to send upon the earth, the kindling blaze of the Holy Ghost, which came down in tongues of fire at Pentecost, to burn freely throughout the world, for the destruction of obstinate unbelievers, and the purifying of those who gladly received the Word. And of this the prophet spake, saying, "I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the LORD." (Ezek. xxxix. 6.) This divine flame goes

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still before the face of the Lord in his coming to every faithful soul, as it kindles with longing for him, and burns up all its sins therewith, as he heaps his coals of fire upon its head, to soften and purify it. "It must needs be," teaches a great saint,* "that the fervour of holy desire must go before his face to every soul to which he means to come, a flame which will burn up all the mildew of sin, and make ready a place for the Lord. And then the soul knows that the Lord is at hand, when it feels itself kindled with that fire, and it saith with the prophet, 'My heart was hot within me; then spake I with my tongue.'"—Psalm xxxix. 3.—*Augustine, and others, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 3.—"*A fire goeth before him.*" There is no less, but rather more wrath attending the despisers of the Gospel, than did attend the giving out of the law. Heb. xii. 29.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—"*His lightnings enlightened the world.*" This passage is applied by Munster to the rapid increase of the kingdom of Christ: for the sound of the Gospel sped through all the world like lightning. There is a prediction almost to this effect in Zech. ix. 14: "His arrow shall go forth as the lightning, and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet."—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 4.—"*The earth saw and trembled.*" The bare *sight* of thee caused the earth to tremble (Ps. lxxvii. 16).—*A. R. Faussett.*

Verse 5.—"*The hills melted like wax at the presence of the* LORD." For a parallel passage see Mic. i. 4. There the words are applied to the judgment of God about to fall on the *people of the covenant:* here they are applied to the judgment on the *God-opposing world.* The fact that 'judgment has begun at the house of God' is a token that judgments of a far more destructive kind will overtake 'the (openly) ungodly and sinners' (1 Pet. iv. 7). "*The hills*" symbolize the heights of man's self-exalting pride of intellect, wealth, and power.—*A. R. Faussett.*

Verse 5.—"*The Lord of the whole earth.*" In this title lies concealed the reason for the liquefaction of the hills, for the God who here manifests himself is he who created the earth, and is able therefore to reduce it to nothing.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 6.—"*The heavens declare,*" etc. He does not say, the heavens exercise, but they declare his righteousness. To the eyes of the wicked the righteousness of God is hidden, until it is made manifest by an astonishing miracle.

"*The heavens.*" This phrase is not, *God* declares, but *the heavens* declare his righteousness. The creature is the servant and revealer of the righteousness of God.

"*His righteousness.*" He says not, the heavens declare *our* righteousness, but *his* righteousness. They testify that God is the righteous judge, rather than that the saints themselves are righteous.

"*All the people.*" Not only do the wicked, those oppressive monsters, see, but "all the people." God so reveals his glory that not only the wicked who are punished may see it, but also other mortals to their edification.

"*And shall see.*" They shall not simply hear or know, but they shall see. This at last is a powerful and convincing demonstration of the righteousness of God, which is put before their eyes.

"*His glory.*" Not merely the destruction of the wicked and vengeance on the enemies of God, but his glory; for in the destruction of the wicked, and the deliverance of the innocent, the glory of God is declared. Thus the prophet rejoices not so much concerning the destruction of the wicked as concerning the glory of God.—*Musculus.*

* S. Bernard.

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Verse 7.—"*Confounded be all they that serve graven images,*" etc. Albeit such as are lovers of imagery not only do serve images, but also will defend the use of images in the exercise of religion, and glory in them; yet shall they at length be ashamed of their boasting.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 7.—"*Worship him, all ye gods,*" or "*Let all the angels of God worship him.*" The matter of the psalm itself makes it manifest that the Holy Ghost treateth in it about God's bringing in the firstborn into the world, and the setting up of his kingdom in him. A kingdom is described wherein God would reign, which should destroy idolatry and false worship; a kingdom wherein the isles of the Gentiles should rejoice, being called to an interest therein; a kingdom that was to be preached, proclaimed, declared, unto the increase of light and holiness in the world, with the manifestation of the glory of God unto the ends of all the earth: every part whereof declareth the kingdom of Christ to be intended in the psalm, and consequently that it is a prophecy of the bringing in of the first-begotten into the world. Our inquiry is, whether the angels be intended in these words. They are כָּל־אֱלֹהִים *omnes dii;* and are so rendered by Jerome, *Adorate eum, omnes dii;* and by our authorised version, "*Worship him, all ye gods.*" The preceding words are, "*Confounded be all they that serve graven images,*" הַמִּתְהַלְּלִים בָּאֱלִילִים, *that boast themselves in* or *of* "*idols,*" "*vanities, nothings,*" as the word signifies, wherein ensues this apostrophe, "*Worship him,* כָּל־אֱלֹהִים, *all ye gods.*" And who they are is our present inquiry. Some, as all the modern Jews, say that it is the gods of the Gentiles, those whom they worship, that are intended; so making אֱלֹהִים and אֱלִילִים, "*gods,*" and "*vain idols,*" to be the same in this place.

But (1) It cannot be that the psalmist should exhort the *idols of the heathen,* some whereof were *devils,* some *dead men,* some *inanimate parts of the creation,* unto a reverential worshipping of God reigning over all. Hence the Targumist, seeing the vanity of that interpretation, perverts the words, and renders them, "Worship before Him, all ye nations which serve idols."

(2) אֱלֹהִים, "Elohim," is so far in this place from being exegetical of אֱלִילִים "gods," or "vain idols"; that it is put in direct opposition to it, as is evident from the words themselves.

(3) The word Elohim, which most frequently denoteth the true God, doth never alone, and absolutely taken, signify *false gods* or idols, but only when it is joined with some other word discovering its application, as *his god,* or *their gods,* or *the gods of this or that people,* in which case it is rendered by the LXX., sometimes εἴδωλον, an "idol;" sometimes χειροποίητον, an "idol made with hands;" sometimes βδέλυγμα an "abomination." But here it hath no such limitation or restriction.

Whereas, therefore, there are some creatures who, by reason of some peculiar excellency and likeness unto God, or subordination unto him in their work, are called gods, it must be those, or some of them, that are intended in the expression. Now these are either *magistrates* or *angels.*

(1) *Magistrates* are somewhere called elohim, because of the representation they make of God in his power, and their peculiar subordination unto him in their working. The Jews, indeed, contend that no other magistrates but those only of the great Sanhedrim are anywhere called gods; but that concerns not our present inquiry. Some magistrates are so called, but none of them are intended by the psalmist, there being no occasion administered unto him of any such apostrophe unto them.

(2) Angels are called elohim: Λεγόμενοι θεοὶ, 1 Cor. viii. 5. They have the name of God attributed unto them, and these are they whom the psalmist speaks unto. Having called on the whole creation to rejoice in the bringing forth of the kingdom of God, and pressed his exhortation upon things on the earth, he turns unto the ministering angels, and calls on them to the discharge of their duty unto the King of that kingdom. Hence the Targumist, in the beginning of Psalm xcvi. expressly mentioned "his high angels," joining in his

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praise and worship, using the Greek word ἄγγελος, for distinction's sake, as on the same account it often occurs in the Targum.

We have thus evinced that the psalm treats about the bringing in of the firstborn into the world; as also that they are the ministering angels who are here commanded to worship him.—*John Owen.*

Verse 8.—"*Zion heard,*" etc. But why, it may be asked, does he speak of those things being *heard*, rather than *seen?* Two reasons may be given for this. First, he would have God's believing people anticipate the blessing by hope, ere the consummation of it arrived; and, again, the language intimates, that the glory of the Gospel would be spread to such distant quarters, that the Jews would rather hear of it by report, than witness it with their own eyes.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 8.—"*The daughters of Judah rejoiced.*" David alludes to a custom familiar in Judea, of forming choral bands of maidens after a victory or some happy circumstance. Thus after the passage of the Red Sea, when the Egyptians were drowned and the people of God brought in safety to the farthest shore, Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her with timbrels and dancing, saying, Let us sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. When Goliath was slain by David, it is said 1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7, "When David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women sang as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 10.—"*Ye that love the* LORD, *hate evil.*" It is evident that our conversion is sound when we loathe and hate sin from the heart: a man may know his hatred of evil to be true, first, if it be universal: he that hates sin truly, hates all sin. Secondly, true hatred is fixed; there is no appeasing it but by abolishing the thing hated. Thirdly, hatred is a more rooted affection than anger: anger may be appeased, but hatred remains and sets itself against the whole kind. Fourthly, if our hatred be true, we hate all evil, in ourselves first, and then in others; he that hates a toad, would hate it most in his own bosom. Many, like Judah, are severe in censuring others (Gen. xxxviii. 24), but partial to themselves. Fifthly, he that hates sin truly, hates the greatest sin in the greatest measure; he hates all evil in a just proportion. Sixthly, our hatred is right if we can endure admonition and reproof for sin, and not be enraged; therefore, those that swell against reproof do not appear to hate sin.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 10.—"*Hate evil.*" Sin seemeth to have its name of *sana*, שׂנא (the word here used) because it is most of all to be hated, as the greatest evil; as that which setteth us furthest from God the greatest good.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 10.—Get mortifying graces, especially love to God, for *those that love the Lord, will hate evil.* And the more they love him, the more they will hate it.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 10.—God is a Spirit, and he looks to our very spirits; and what we are in our spirits, in our hearts and affections, that we are to him. Therefore, what ill we shun, let us do it from the heart, by hating it first. A man may avoid an evil action from fear, or out of other respects, but that is not sincerity. Therefore look to thy heart, see that thou hate evil, and let it come from sincere looking to God. "*Ye that love the* LORD, *hate evil,*" saith David: not only avoid it, but hate it; and not only hate it, but hate it out of love to God.—*Richard Sibbes.*

Verse 10.—"*Hate evil.*"

LUCIAN. I am the declared enemy of all false pretence, all quackery, all lies,

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and all puffing. I am a lover of truth, of beauty, of undisguised nature; in short, of everything that is lovely.

PHILOSOPHY. To love and to hate, they say, spring from one and the same source.

LUCIAN. That, O philosophy, must be best known to you. My business is to hate the bad, and to love and commend the good; and that I stick to.—*Lucian.* Piscat. c. 8.

Verse 10.—"*He preserveth the souls of his saints.*" Let us observe that there are two parts of divine protection—preservation and deliverance. Preservation is keeping lest we should be imperilled: deliverance has reference to those already involved in perils. The shepherd keeps his sheep lest they should fall among wolves; but if perchance they should fall into the clutches of the wolf he pursues and delivers. Both parts the Prophet exhibits, persuading us that it is the Lord who keeps the souls of his saints lest they fall into the hands of the wicked; and if they should fall, He will deliver them.—*Musculus.*

Verse 11.—"*Light is sown.*" זָרַע does not here signify sown=strewn into the earth, but strewn along his life's way, so that he, the righteous one, advances step by step in the light. Hitzig rightly compares κίδναται, σκίδναται, used of the dawn and of the sun. Of the former Virgil also says, *Et jam prima novo spargebat lumine terras.*—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 11.—"*Light is sown.*"

> And now Aurora, from the saffron bed
> Of her Tithonus rising, sow'd the earth
> With dewy light.
>
> — *C. R. Kennedy's Translation of Virgil.*

Verse 11.—"*Light is sown.*"

> Now Morn, her rosy steps in the eastern clime
> Advancing, sow'd the earth with orient pearl.
>
> *John Milton.*

Verse 11.—"*Light is sown for the righteous.*" Most thoughtful men increase in faith and spiritual discernment by often doubting, and by having their doubts cleared up. Religious thought in this way grows into a personal feeling; and the solid rock of truer conviction and deeper trust as a firm foundation for the soul to build upon for eternity, remains behind after all the abrasion of loose and more perishable materials through speculation. A different if not a truer revelation of heavenly realities is given to us through the dark distressing process of doubting, than through the bright joyful exercise of unhesitating faith; just as our knowledge of the chemistry of the sun and stars, of the physical constitution of distant worlds, is derived not from the bright bands of their spectrum, which reveal only their size and shape, but from Fraunhofer's wonderful lines—those black blank spaces breaking up the spectrum bands—which tell us of rays arrested in their path and prevented from bearing their message to us by particular metallic vapours. Unto the upright, just because of the purity and singleness of their motives and the earnestness of their quest after truth, there ariseth light in the darkness. We must remember that "light is *sown* for the righteous"; that its more or less rapid germination and development depend upon the nature of the soil on which it falls and the circumstances that influence it; that, like seed, it at first lies concealed in the dark furrow, under the cheerless clod, in the cold ungenial winter; but that even then, while shining in the darkness, while struggling with doubts and difficulties of the mind and heart, it is nevertheless the source of much comfort, and in its slow, quickening, and hidden growth the cause of lively hope, and of bright anticipation of that time when it shall blossom and ripen in the summer-time of heaven—shine more and more unto the perfect day.—*Hugh Macmillan, in "The Ministry of Nature,"* 1871.

Verse 11.—"*Light is sown for the righteous:*" sown in these two fields, 1. *Of*

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God's eternal decree, in his power, promise, grace and love. These are the "upper springs." 2. In the field of their *graces*, and holy *duties;* these are the "nether springs;" both which fall into one river, and "make glad the city of God;" both these fields yield a plentiful harvest of comfort to the godly. —*John Sheffield, in "The Rising Sun,"* 1654.

Verse 11.—"*Sown.*" The righteous man's harvest is secret and hidden. It lieth, like the corn covered in the ground; "their life is hid;" and "it is not manifest what they shall be;" "no eye hath seen, or ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what the Lord hath laid up for them that love him" (Col. iii. 3; 1 John iii. 2; 1 Cor. ii. 9). Name what you can, and it will be a mystery, a secret thing, that belongs to the upright in heart. First, is not the decree of God a hidden thing? a depth unsearchable? and able to make a man astonied? Did not Paul cry out, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. xii. 33). And is not the incarnation of Christ a secret too? what more to be admired than that God should become man, and be manifested in the flesh? The very angels desired to peep into this mystery. 1 Tim. iii. 16; 1 Pet. i. 12; Isai. vii. 14. Again, the conversion and regeneration of a sinner is admirable; it's a noble, yet a secret work: Nicodemus a great doctor could not see it. And if natural births be so strange, what shall we judge of this? Moreover, peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost is no open matter; none knoweth it, but he that hath it. So is the earnest of the Spirit, and true seal of salvation; the power, life and sweetness of the word; the remission and pardon of sin, with certainty of salvation. And in the fifth place, the harvest is secret, if we consider where it is growing. One close is, *the secret purpose of God;* and who can understand it? A second is, *his word;* and how hardly is that to be searched into? A third is, *a man's own heart;* and is not that both secret and deceitful? And last of all, the very principal part of the harvest is hid *with Christ in heaven;* and when he appears, it will appear what it shall be.—*John Barlow.*

Verses 11 *and* 12 are both most savoury and precious notanda.—Give me to experience, O Lord, those revelations which follow in the train of obedience; and O that I felt the charm and enjoyment of holiness, so as to give thanks, in the reflection that with a holy God holiness is an indispensable requisite for our appearing in his presence. We should further be grateful because of this essential attribute in the Godhead; for it is in virtue of his holiness that evil cannot dwell with him, and that the world will at length be delivered, and this conclusively, from the wickedness and malice and vile sensualities by which it is now so disquieted and deformed. Hasten this consummation, O Lord.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 12.—"*Rejoice in the* LORD." We must "rejoice evermore;" for even holy mourning hath the seed of joy in it, which the soul finds by that time it is over, if not in it.—*William Cooper, in the "Morning Exercises."*

Verse 12.—"*Rejoice in the Lord.*" I. Our rejoicing in the Lord denotes our taking a very sincere and cordial pleasure in whatever relates to the ever-blessed God, particularly his existence, perfections, and providence; the discoveries of his will to us, especially in his word; the interest we have in him, and the relations wherein we stand to him; his continual protection, guidance and influence; his gracious intercourse with us in the duties of religious worship; and, finally, the hope he has given us of fulness of joy, in his beatific and most glorious presence above. II. Rejoicing in the Lord signifies that our joy in God is superior to all our other joys, otherwise it is a joy unworthy of him, and no way, or not savingly, profitable to us. III. Whatever else we rejoice in, we are to rejoice in such a manner, that we may be properly said to rejoice in the Lord, even when other things are the immediate occasions of our joy. The God we serve is not an envious and a malevolent Being, but exceeding liberal and kind; he has created us with an inextinguishable desire after hap-

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piness, as a secret intimation that he intends to make us happy, if we do not make ourselves miserable; and while our principal happiness is lodged in himself, and to be found nowhere else, (in which he has shown the singular regard he has to our nature), he feeds our hearts with a thousand little rivulets of joy and satisfaction from created objects: our bodies are endowed with a variety of senses and appetites, and our souls with powers and faculties of their own; nor was any one sense or faculty made in vain, or to lie always idle and useless; but every sense, and much more every mental faculty, has not one. but a great number of things provided to entertain it. But then the soul is not to lose itself in this maze and labyrinth of delight; it is not by this variety to be diverted from that one infinite good, who eminently contains in himself all the various kinds and degrees of true joy.—*Henry Grove*, 1683—1737-8.

Verse 12.—"*Rejoice . . . and give thanks.*" Two things are to be observed: One, that he unites joy in the Lord and praise of God. Rightly: for it is not possible for a man to praise the Lord truly and from the soul, unless he rejoices in Him. Another, that he connects the praise of God with the remembrance of his holiness. And with good reason: for it is the chief use of divine praise, that by the exercise thereof, we should keep fresh in our souls the remembrance of God and of all the blessings received from Him. Thus this verse contains the root and fruit of divine praise. The root is joy in God; the fruit is the remembrance of God and his goodness.—*Musculus.*

Verse 12.—"*Ye righteous . . . all ye that are upright in heart.*" Some may say the *just* or the *righteous* man may thus rejoice; but where are any such? "Who can say," saith Solomon, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" No; "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." A vain thing may it seem then to exhort men to rejoice, when the condition annexed is such as excludeth all from rejoicing. To what end is it to incite the *just* to rejoice when there are none such that may rejoice? The answer is ready at hand in the latter part of the verse. By *just* are meant all such as are "*upright in heart*," which clause is added partly to exclude the hypocrite, and partly to temper and qualify the rigour of the term before used, if it were strictly and exactly taken. So that it is a note as well of *extent*, as of *restraint.*

1. Of *restraint*, to exclude from this joy, and all right therein, all dissemblers, all counterfeit Christians, all hollow-hearted hypocrites, that repent in the face but not in the heart; that make a sour face that they may seem to fast, saith our Saviour, that justify themselves in the sight of men, but God seeth their hearts what they are, and seeth them to be far other than either they should be, or they pretend themselves to be.

2. Of *extent*, to extend and enlarge this joy, the ground of it and the right to it, to all that are single and sincere-hearted; and so to give and afford a share and a portion in it as well to those that are sincerely righteous on earth, as to those that are perfectly righteous in heaven. It is as a *key* to let in the one. It is as a *bolt* to bar out the other.—*Thomas Gataker.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—The sovereignty of God a theme for joy in many respects and to many persons, especially when exhibited in a reign of grace.

Verses 3—6.—The accompaniments of Christ's gospel advent. I. The fire of his Spirit. II. The light of the word. III. The commotion in the world. IV. The removal of obstacles. V. The display of the divine glory.

Verses 4, 5.—I. The terrors which accompanied the giving of the law: "his lightnings," etc. II. The reasons for those terrors. 1. To show the guilt of

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man. 2. His inability to keep the law. 3. To show his need of a law-fulfiller on his behalf.—*G. R.*

Verses 4—6.—A description of the giving of the law. I. The lawgiver's heralds, or, *conviction*, ver. 4. II. The effect of his presence, or, *contrition*, ver. 5. III. The proclamation of the law, or, *instruction* (as by a voice from heaven, ver. 6). IV. The effect of the lawgiving, or, divine *manifestation* (ver. 6, latter clause).—*C. D.*

Verse 5.—The presence of God in the church her invincible power.

Verse 6.—The confusion of heart which will ensue from idolatrous worship, even if it be only spiritual. Breaking of the idol, disappointment in it, injury by it, removal from it, etc.

Verse 8.—I. The world is terrified at the divine judgments. II. The church rejoices in them, "Zion heard," etc.; or, I. When the world is glad the church is sad. II. When the world is sad the church is glad.—*G. R.*

Verse 10.—I. What you do now:—"Love the Lord." Reciprocally, personally, supremely, habitually, progressively. II. What you must do:—"Hate evil." Evil working, evil writing, evil speaking, evil thinking; renounce evil, master it, supplant it.—*W. J.*

Verse 10.—I. The distinguishing peculiarity of the people of God: "Ye that love the Lord." II. Its manifestation: "Hate evil." III. Its reward: "The Lord preserveth," etc.; "He delivereth," etc.—*G. R.*

Verses 10, 11.—David notes in God three characteristics of a true friend: First with fidelity and good will He keepeth the souls of the pious. Secondly, with his power and majesty He delivereth them from their enemies. Thirdly, with his wisdom and holiness He enlightens and refreshes them.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 11.—I. *Where is it sown?* The answer to this will come under the following heads, viz. In the purpose of God, In the purchase of Christ, In the office of the Spirit, In the promises of the Word, In the work of Grace wrought in the heart, and, In the preparations made above in glory. II. *When is the season of reaping?* And to this, the answer is, The season of reaping the first fruits, of reaping in part, is at certain times in the present life; the season of reaping more fully is at death; and of reaping most fully and perfectly commenceth at the day of judgment and is continued throughout eternity. 1. The season of reaping in part falls out at some times within the course of this present life. Particularly (1) Times of affliction have been to the upright, seasons of reaping the joy sown. By this they have been prepared for sufferings, supported under them, and made afterwards to forget their sorrows, by reason of the gladness breaking in from the affecting discovery of what God has done for them, and wrought in them. Thus God causeth light to arise in darkness, and in a rainy day refresheth them with a beam from heaven, brightening the drops that fall; brings his people into the wilderness, and there speaks comfortably unto them. (2) Seasons of suffering for the sake of Christ and the gospel, have been seasons wherein the upright have begun to reap the joy sown. When called to resist unto blood, striving against sin, they have need of more than ordinary comfort, to enable them to meet, and hold firm through the fiery trial: and they have found that then encouragement hath been yielded them in a degree they never before experienced (John xvi. 33). (3.) Seasons wherein God has called the righteous to great and difficult service, have been seasons of reaping the beginnings of joys sown. When their heavenly Father has lifted up the light of his countenance upon them, and shed abroad the sense of his love within them, they are prepared to go whither he sends them, and to do whatever he bids them. (4.) After sore conflicts with Satan, the upright have been revived by the springing of the joy sown. After Christ was tempted came an angel to comfort him. And for the encouragement of his followers he declares, Rev. ii. 17, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." (5.) In waiting upon God in the sanctuary the

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upright have met with him, and so have had the beginnings of joy sown. 2. A fuller reaping time will be at death; with some as the soul is going; but with all immediately after its release from the body. 3. The season in which the righteous shall reap their joy sown, to the full, and in perfection, shall be at the last day. Then Christ shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe, and lead them all in a body, and all of them perfected, into that presence of God, where there is fulness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore.—*Daniel Wilcox.*

Verse 12.—"*Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.*" Be thankful for—1. Its unsullied perfection. 2. Its wondrous forbearance. 3. Its place in our salvation. 4. Its approachableness through Christ. 5. Its predicted triumphs.—*W. J.*

Verse 12.—I. A remembrance at which the world does not give thanks. II. Reasons which make it a matter of thanksgiving with the righteous. Its bearing on the way of salvation; on the doctrines of the gospel; on the law of the Christian life.—*C. D.*

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PSALM XCVIII.

TITLE AND SUBJECT.—*This sacred ode, which bears simply the title of "A Psalm," follows fitly upon the last, and is evidently an integral part of the series of royal psalms. If* xcvii. *described the publication of the gospel, and so the setting up of the kingdom of heaven, the present Psalm is a sort of* CORONATION HYMN, *officially proclaiming the conquering Messiah as Monarch over the nations, with blast of trumpets, clapping of hands, and celebration of triumphs. It is a singularly bold and lively song. The critics have fully established the fact that similar expressions occur in Isaiah, but we see no force in the inference that therefore it was written by him; on this principle half the books in the English language might be attributed to Shakespeare. The fact is that these associated Psalms make up a mosaic, in which each one of them has an appropriate place, and is necessary to the completeness of the whole; and therefore we believe them to be each and all the work of one and the same mind. Paul, if we understand him aright, ascribes Psalm ninety-five to David, and as we believe that the same writer must have written the whole group, we ascribe this also to the son of Jesse. However that may be, the song is worthy to rank among the most devout and soul-stirring of sacred lyrics.*

DIVISIONS.—*We have here three stanzas of three verses each. In the first,* 1—3, *the subject of praise is announced; in the second,* 4—6, *the manner of that praise is prescribed; and in the third,* 7—9, *the universal extent of it is proclaimed.*

EXPOSITION.

O SING unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.

2 The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.

3 He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

1. "*O sing unto the* LORD *a new song; for he hath done marvellous things.*" We had a new song before (Ps. xcvi.) because the Lord was coming, but now we have another new song because he has come, and seen and conquered. Jesus, our King, has lived a marvellous life, died a marvellous death, risen by a marvellous resurrection, and ascended marvellously into heaven. By his divine power he has sent forth the Holy Spirit doing marvels, and by that sacred energy his disciples have also wrought marvellous things and astonished all the earth. Idols have fallen, superstitions have withered, systems of error have fled, and empires of cruelty have perished. For all this he deserves the highest praise. His acts have proved his Deity, Jesus is Jehovah, and therefore we sing unto him as the LORD. "*His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory*"; not by the aid of others, but by his own unweaponed hand his marvellous conquests have been achieved. Sin, death, and hell fell beneath his solitary prowess, and the idols and the errors of mankind have been overthrown and smitten by his hand alone. The victories of Jesus among men are all the more wonderful because they are accomplished by means to all appearance most inadequate; they are due not to physical but to moral power—the energy of goodness, justice, truth; in a word, to the power of his *holy* arm. His holy influence has been the sole

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cause of success. Jesus never stoops to use policy, or brute force; his unsullied perfections secure to him a real and lasting victory over all the powers of evil, and that victory will be gained as dexterously and easily as when a warrior strikes his adversary with his *right hand* and stretches him prone upon the earth. Glory be unto the Conqueror, let new songs be chanted to his praise. Stirred by contemplating his triumphs, our pen could not forbear to praise him in the following hymn:—

Forth to the battle rides our King;
He climbs his conquering car;
He fits his arrows to the string,
And smites his foes afar.

Convictions pierce the stoutest hearts,
They bleed, they faint, they die;
Slain by Immanuel's well-aimed darts,
In helpless heaps they lie.

Behold, he bares his two-edged sword,
And deals almighty blows,
His all-revealing, killing word
'Twixt joint and marrow goes.

Anon arrayed in robes of grace
He rides the trampled plain,
With pity beaming from his face,
And mercy in his train.

Mighty to save he now appears,
Mighty to raise the dead,
Mighty to stanch the bleeding wound,
And lift the fallen head.

Victor alike in love and arms,
Myriads before him bend:
Such are the Conqueror's matchless charms,
Each foe becomes his friend.

They crown him on the battle-field
Of all the nations King;
With trumpets and with cornets loud
They make the welkin ring.

The salvation which Jesus has accomplished is wrought out with wonderful wisdom, hence it is ascribed to his right hand; it meets the requirements of justice, hence we read of his holy arm; it is his own unaided work, hence all the glory is ascribed to him; and it is marvellous beyond degree, hence it deserves a new song.

2. "*The* LORD *hath made known his salvation*,"—by the coming of Jesus and by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, by whose power the gospel was preached among the Gentiles. The Lord is to be praised not only for effecting human salvation, but also for making it known, for man would never have discovered it for himself; nay, not so much as one single soul would ever have found out for himself the way of mercy through a Mediator; in every case it is a divine revelation to the mind and heart. In God's own light his light is seen. He must reveal his Son in us, or we shall be unable to discern him. "*His righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.*" This word "righteousness" is the favourite word of the apostle of the Gentiles; he loves to dwell on the Lord's method of making man righteous, and vindicating divine justice by the atoning blood. What songs ought we to render who belong to a once heathen race, for that blessed gospel which is the power of God unto salvation, "for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." This is no close secret; it is clearly taught in Scripture, and has been plainly preached among the nations. What was hidden in the types is "openly shewed" in the gospel.

3. "*He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel.*" To them Jesus came in the flesh, and to them was the gospel first preached;

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and though they counted themselves unworthy of eternal life, yet the covenant was not broken, for the true Israel were called into fellowship and still remain so. The mercy which endureth for ever, and the fidelity which cannot forget a promise, secure to the chosen seed the salvation long ago guaranteed by the covenant of grace. "*All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.*" Not to Abraham's seed alone after the flesh, but to the elect among all nations, has grace been given; therefore, let the whole church of God sing unto him a new song. It was no small blessing, or little miracle, that throughout all lands the gospel should be published in so short a time, with such singular success and such abiding results. Pentecost deserves a new song as well as the Passion and the Resurrection; let out hearts exult as we remember it. *Our* God, our own for ever blessed God, has been honoured by those who once bowed down before dumb idols; his salvation has not only been heard of but seen among all people, it has been experienced as well as explained; his Son is the actual Redeemer of a multitude out of all nations.

4 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.

5 Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.

6 With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King.

In these three verses we are taught how to praise the Lord.

4. "*Make a joyful noise unto the* LORD, *all the earth.*" Every tongue must applaud, and that with the vigour which joy of heart alone can arouse to action. As men shout when they welcome a king, so must we. Loud hosannas, full of happiness, must be lifted up. If ever men shout for joy it should be when the Lord comes among them in the proclamation of his gospel reign. John Wesley said to his people, "Sing lustily, and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sung the songs of Satan." "*Make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise;*" or "*Burst forth, and sing, and play.*" Let every form of exultation be used, every kind of music pressed into the service till the accumulated praise causes the skies to echo the joyful tumult. There is no fear of our being too hearty in magnifying the God of our salvation, only we must take care that the song comes from the heart, otherwise the music is nothing but a noise in his ears, whether it be caused by human throats, or organ pipes, or far-resounding trumpets. Loud let our hearts ring out the honours of our conquering Saviour; with all our might let us extol the Lord who has vanquished all our enemies, and led our captivity captive. He will do this best who is most in love with Jesus:—

> "I've found the pearl of greatest price,
> My heart doth sing for joy;
> And sing I must, a Christ I have.
> Oh, what a Christ have I!"

5. "*Sing unto the* LORD *with the harp.*" Skill in music should not be desecrated to the world's evil mirth, it should aid the private devotions of the saint, and then, like George Herbert, he will sing,—

> "My God, my God,
> My music shall find thee,
> And every string
> Shall have his attribute to sing."

Martin Luther was thus wont to praise the Lord, whom he loved so well. God's praises should be performed in the best possible manner, but their sweetness mainly lies in spiritual qualities. The concords of faith and repentance,

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the harmonies of obedience and love are true music in the ear of the Most High, and better please him than "heaving bellows taught to blow," though managed by the noblest master of human minstrelsy. "*With the harp.*" A very sweet instrument of music, and capable of great expression. The repetition of the word is highly poetical, and shows that the daintiest expressions of poetry are none too rich for the praise of God. His worship should be plain, but not uncouth, if we can compass elegancies of expression there are occasions upon which they will be most appropriate; God, who accepts the unlettered ditty of a ploughman, does not reject the smooth verse of a Cowper, or the sublime strains of a Milton. All repetitions are not vain repetitions, in sacred song there should be graceful repeats, they render the sense emphatic, and help to fire the soul; even preachers do not amiss when they dwell on a word and sound it out again and again, till dull ears feel its emphasis. "*And the voice of a psalm,*" or with *a musical voice*, as distinguished from common speech. Our voice has in it many modulations; there is the voice of conversation, the voice of complaint, the voice of pleading, the voice of command, and there ought to be with each of us the voice of a psalm. Man's voice is at its best when it sings the best words in the best spirit to the best of Beings. Love and war must not monopolise the lyric muse; the love of God and the conquests of Immanuel should win to themselves man's sweetest strains. Do we sing enough unto the Lord? May not the birds of the air rebuke our sullen and ungrateful silence?

6. "*With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise.*" God's worship should be heartily loud. The far resounding trump and horn well symbolise the power which should be put forth in praise. "*Before the* LORD, *the King.*" On coronation days, and when beloved monarchs ride abroad, the people shout and the trumpets sound till the walls ring again. Shall men be more enthusiastic for their earthly princes than for the divine King? Is there no loyalty left among the subjects of the blessed and only Potentate? *King Jehovah* is his name; and there is none like it, have we no joyful noise for him? Let but the reigning power of Jesus be felt in the soul and we shall cast aside that chill mutter, drowned by the pealing organ, which is now so commonly the substitute for earnest congregational singing.

Say, if your hearts are tuned to sing,
  Is there a subject greater?
Harmony all its strains may bring,
  But Jesus' name is sweeter.

Who of his love doth once partake,
  He evermore rejoices;
Melody in our hearts we make,
  Melody with our voices.

7 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

8 Let the floods clap *their* hands: let the hills be joyful together

9 Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

7. "*Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.*" Even its thunders will not be too grand for such a theme. Handel, in some of his sublime choruses, would have been glad of its aid to express his lofty conceptions, and assuredly the inspired psalmist did well to call in such infinite uproar. The sea is his, let it praise its Maker. Within and upon its bosom it bears a wealth of goodness, why should it be denied a place in the orchestra of nature? Its deep bass will excellently suit the mystery of the divine glory. "*The world, and they*

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that dwell therein." The land should be in harmony with the ocean. Its mountains and plains, cities and villages, should prolong the voice of jubilee which welcomes the Lord of all. Nothing can be more sublime than this verse; the muses of Parnassus cannot rival the muse of Zion, the Castalian fount never sparkled like that "fount of every blessing" to which sacred bards are wont to ascribe their inspiration. Yet no song is equal to the majesty of the theme when Jehovah, the King, is to be extolled.

8. "*Let the floods clap their hands.*" The rolling rivers, the tidal estuaries, the roaring cataracts, are here summoned to pay their homage, and to clap their hands, as men do when they greet their sovereigns with acclamation. "*Let the hills be joyful together,*" or in concert with the floods. Silent as are the mighty mountains, let them forget themselves, and burst forth into a sublime uproariousness of mirth, such as the poet described when he wrote those vivid lines—

> "Far along,
> From peak to peak, the rattling crags among,
> Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
> But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
> And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,
> Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud."

9. "*Before the* LORD; *for he cometh to judge the earth.*" Stiller music such as made the stars twinkle with their soft kind eyes suited his first coming at Bethlehem, but his second advent calls for trumpets, for he is a judge; and for all earth's acclamations, for he has put on his royal splendour. The rule of Christ is the joy of nature. All things bless his throne, yea, and the very coming of it. As the dawn sets the earth weeping for joy at the rising of the sun, till the dewdrops stand in her eyes, so should the approach of Jesu's universal reign make all creation glad. "*With righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.*" This is the joy of it. No tyrant and no weakling is he, to oppress the good or to indulge the vain, his law is good, his action right, his government the embodiment of justice. If ever there was a thing to rejoice in upon this poor, travailing earth, it is the coming of such a deliverer, the ascension to the universal throne of such a governor. All hail, Jesus! all hail! Our soul faints with delight at the sound of thine approaching chariots, and can only cry, "Come quickly. Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!"

Keble's version of the last four verses is so truly beautiful that we cannot deny our readers the luxury of perusing it:—

> "Ring out, with horn and trumpet ring,
> In shouts before the Lord the King:
> Let ocean with his fulness swing
> In restless unison:
>
> "Earth's round and all the dwellers there,
> The mighty floods the burden bear,
> And clap the hand: in choral air
> Join every mountain lone.
>
> "Tell out before the Lord, that he
> Is come, the Judge of earth to be,
> To judge the world in equity,
> Do right to realm and throne."

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EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—The inscription of the psalm in Hebrew is only the single word מִזְמוֹר *Mizmor*, "Psalm" (whence probably the title "orphan Mizmor" in the Talmudic treatise Avodah Zara).—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Title.—Hengstenberg remarks, "This is the only psalm which is entitled simply 'a psalm.' This common name of all the psalms cannot be employed here in its general sense, but must have a peculiar meaning." He considers that it indicates that this is the lyric accompaniment of the more decidedly prophetical psalm which precedes it,—in fact, the psalm of that prophecy. He also notes that in the original we have in verses 5 and 6 words akin to the title brought into great prominence, and perhaps this may have suggested it.

Title.—It is at least interesting to notice that a song of Zion which so exults in the king's arrival should be called pre-eminently מִזְמוֹר, Mizmor; as if the Psalm of Psalms were that which celebrates *Israel, and the earth at large, blessed in Messiah's Advent.—Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm.—A noble, spirit-stirring psalm. It may have been written on the occasion of a great national triumph at the time; but may, perhaps, afterwards be taken up at the period of the great millennial restoration of all things. The victory here celebrated may be in prophetic vision, and that at Armageddon. Then will salvation and righteousness be openly manifested in the sight of the hostile nations. Israel will be exalted; and the blessed conjunction of mercy and truth will gladden and assure the hearts of all who at that time are Israelites indeed. Godliness will form the reigning characteristic of the whole earth.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Whole Psalm.—The subject of the Psalm is the praise of Jehovah. It consists of three strophes of three verses each. The first strophe shows *why*, the second *how* Jehovah is to be praised; and the third *who* are to praise him.—*Frederick Fysh.*

Whole Psalm.—This psalm is an evident prophecy of Christ's coming to save the world; and what is here *foretold* by David is, in the Blessed Virgin's Song, chanted forth as being *accomplished.* David is the *Voice*, and Mary is the *Echo.*

1. DAVID. "O sing unto the Lord a new song." (The *Voice.*)
   MARY. "My soul doth magnify the Lord." (The *Echo.*)
2. DAVID. "He hath done marvellous things." (The *Voice.*)
   MARY. "He that is mighty hath done great things." (The *Echo.*)
3. DAVID. "With his own right hand and holy arm hath he gotten himself the victory." (The *Voice.*)
   MARY. "He hath showed strength with his arm, and scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." (The *Echo.*)
4. DAVID. "The Lord hath made known his salvation; his righteousness hath he openly showed," &c. (The *Voice.*)
   MARY. "His mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation." (The *Echo.*)
5. DAVID. "He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel." (The *Voice.*)
   MARY. "He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy." (The *Echo.*)

These parallels are very striking; and it seems as if Mary had this psalm in her eye when she composed her song of triumph. And this is a farther argument that the whole psalm, whether it record the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, or the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, is yet to be ultimately understood of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, and the proclamation of his gospel through all the nations of the earth: and taken in this view, no language can be too strong, nor poetic imagery too high, to point out the unsearchable riches of Christ.—*Adam Clarke.*

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Verse 1.—"*O sing unto the* LORD *a new song.*" This is man's end, to seek God in this life, to see God in the next; to be a subject in the kingdom of grace, and a saint in the kingdom of glory. Whatsoever in this world befalleth us, we must sing: be thankful for weal, for woe: songs ought always to be in our mouth, and sometimes a new song: for so David here, "*sing a new song:*" that is, let us put off the old man, and become new men, new creatures in Christ: for the old man sings old songs: only the new man sings a new song; he speaketh with a new tongue, and walks in new ways, and therefore doth new things, and sings new songs; his language is not of Babylon or Egypt, but of Canaan; his communication doth edify men, his song glorify God. Or a *new* song, that is, a fresh song, *nova res, novum canticum*, new for a new benefit. Eph. v. 20: "*Give thanks always for all things.*" It is very gross to thank God only in gross, and not in parcel. Hast thou been sick and now made whole? praise God with the *leper*, Luke xvii.: sing a new song for this new salve. Dost thou hunger and thirst after righteousness, whereas heretofore thou couldest not endure the words of exhortation and doctrine? sing a new song for this new grace. Doth Almighty God give thee a true sense of thy sin, whereas heretofore thou didst draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with cart ropes, and wast given over to work all uncleanness with greediness? *O sing, sing, sing*, a new song for this new mercy.

Or *new*, that is, no common or ordinary song; but as God's mercy toward us is exceeding marvellous and extraordinary, so our thanks ought to be most exquisite, and more than ordinary: not new in regard of the matter, for we may not pray to God or praise God otherwise than he hath prescribed in his word, which is the old way, but new in respect of the manner and making, that as occasion is offered, we may bear our wits after the best fashion to be thankful.

Or, because this psalm is prophetical, a *new* song, that is, the song of the glorious angels at Christ's birth, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," (Luke ii. 14); a song which the world never heard before: that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head is an old song, the first that ever was sung; but this was no *plain song*, till Christ did manifest himself in the flesh. In the Old Testament there were many old songs, but in the New Testament a new song. That "unto us is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," is in many respects *a new song;* for whereas Christ was but shadowed in the Law, he is showed in the Gospel; and *new*, because sung of new men, of all men. For the sound of the Gospel is gone through all the earth, unto the ends of the world (Rom. x. 18); whereas in old time God's old songs were sung in Jewry: "His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion," Psalm lxxvi. 1, 2.—*John Boys.*

Verse 1.—"*A new song.*" O ye who are new in Christ, though formerly old in the Old Adam, sing ye to the Lord.—*Psalter of Peter Lombard*, 1474.

Verse 1.—"*He hath done marvellous things.*" He has opened his greatness and goodness in the work of redemption. What *marvels* has not Christ done? 1. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost. 2. Born of a virgin. 3. Healed all manner of diseases. 4. Fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes. 5. Raised the dead. 6. And what was more *marvellous*, died himself. 7. Rose again by his own power. 8. Ascended to heaven. 9. Sent down the Holy Ghost. 10. And made his apostles and their testimony the instruments of enlightening, and ultimately converting, the world.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 1.—"*His right hand.*" Since the Psalmist says, that Christ hath gotten him the victory by his right hand and his arm, it is not only a demonstration of his divine and infinite power, but also excludes all other means, as the merits of saints and their meretricious works.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 1.—"*Holy arm.*" The creation was the work of God's *fingers:* "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers," Ps. viii. 3; redemption a work of his *arm;* "*His holy arm* hath gotten him the victory"; yea, it

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was a work of his heart, even that bled to death to accomplish it.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 1.—A clergyman in the county of Tyrone had, for some weeks, observed a little ragged boy come every Sunday, and place himself in the centre of the aisle, directly opposite the pulpit, where he seemed exceedingly attentive to the services. He was desirous of knowing who the child was, and for this purpose hastened out, after the sermon, several times, but never could see him, as he vanished the moment service was over, and no one knew whence he came or anything about him. At length the boy was missed from his usual situation in the church for some weeks. At this time a man called on the minister, and told him a person very ill was desirous of seeing him; but added, "I am really ashamed to ask you to go so far; but it is a child of mine, and he refuses to have any one but you; he is altogether an extraordinary boy, and talks a great deal about things that I do not understand." The clergyman promised to go, and went, though the rain poured down in torrents, and he had six miles of rugged mountain country to pass. On arriving where he was directed, he saw a most wretched cabin indeed, and the man he had seen in the morning was waiting at the door. He was shown in, and found the inside of the hovel as miserable as the outside. In a corner, on a little straw, he beheld a person stretched out, whom he recognised as the little boy who had so regularly attended his church. As he approached the wretched bed the child raised himself up, and, stretching forth his arms, said, "*His own right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory,*" and immediately he expired.—*K. Arvine.*

Verse 2.—"*The* LORD *hath made known his salvation.*" By the appearance of his Son in the flesh, and the wonders which he did. "*His righteousness hath he openly shewed,*" etc., in the gospel, to all men; that righteousness which is called the "righteousness of God," and which is enjoyed by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference. Rom. iii. 22.—*B. Boothroyd.*

Verse 2.—"*The* LORD *hath made known,*" etc. The word חדיע denotes not only a *publication* and promulgation, but also a clear and certain demonstration which produces conviction and causes the matter to be *laid up* in the mind and memory and preserved: for the proper signification of the root ידע is *to lay up what is to be preserved.* The word גלה is added, which properly means to *uncover, to be uncovered,* hence *he revealed* or *uncovered,* that it might be both naked and clear, for the purpose of more fully illustrating the character of the manifestation of the Gospel, opposed to what is obscure, involved in shadows and types, and veiled in legal ceremonies. Of which the apostle treats expressly in 2 Cor. iii. Lastly, when it is added, that *in the sight of the nations* this uncovering is done, it signifies that this salvation pertains to them also, that it comes to them without distinction, since the Gospel is nakedly and clearly announced. From which it also clearly appears, that the matter and reason of the *new song* are found in such a singular event, since God who formerly permitted the nations to walk in their own ways, now under Messiah calls all without distinction to salvation through faith and newness of life.—*Venema.*

Verse 2.—"*Made known:*" He says not, *He shewed,* but *He made known.* Adam knew him, and predicted concerning him, "A man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh." Abel knew him, who offered the lamb; Seth knew him, and called upon him; Noah knew him, and saved all the race in the ark; Abraham knew him, and offered up his son to him. But because the world had forgotten him and worshipped idols, the Lord made his Jesus *known,* when he sent the Word in flesh to the Jews, and *revealed his righteousness* to the nations, when he justified them through faith. Wherefore did he reveal him to the nations? Because of his mercy. Wherefore did he make him known to the Jews? Because of his truth, that is, his promise.—*Honorius, the Continuator of Gerhohus.*

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Verse 3.—"*He hath remembered his mercy and his truth.*" The psalmist very properly observes, that God in redeeming the world "*remembered his truth,*" which he had given to Israel his people—language, too, which implies that he was influenced by no other motive than that of faithfully performing what he had himself promised. The more clearly to show that the promise was not grounded at all on the merit or righteousness of man, he mentions the "*mercy*" of God first, and afterwards his "*faithfulness*" which stood connected with it. The cause, in short, was not to be found out of God himself, (to use a common expression,) but in his mere good pleasure, which had been testified long before to Abraham and his posterity. The word "*remembered*" is used in accommodation to man's apprehension; for what has been long suspended seems to have been forgotten. Upwards of two thousand years elapsed from the time of giving the promise to the appearance of Christ, and as the people of God were subjected to many afflictions and calamities, we need not wonder that they should have sighed, and given way to ominous fears regarding the fulfilment of this redemption.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 3.—"*He hath remembered his mercy and his truth.*" His *mercy* moved him to make his promise, and his *truth* hath engaged him to perform it; and he hath been mindful of both, by scattering the blessed influences of his light and bounty over the face of the whole earth, and causing all nations to see and partake of the salvation of God.—*Matthew Hole* (—1730).

Verse 3.—"*All the ends of the earth have seen,*" etc. O unhappy Judea, *the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of God,* every land is moved to joy, the whole globe is glad, the floods clap their hands, the hills rejoice; yet the evil hearts of the Jews believe not, but are smitten with the penalty of unbelief in the darkness of their blindness.—*Gregory, in Lorinus.*

Verse 3.—"*Have seen.*" There is a degree of point in the expression "*have seen;*" it implies actual faith, united with knowledge, that moves the will to love and to desire; for they cannot be said to have seen God's salvation, who, content with nominal faith, never bestow a thought on the Saviour.—*Bellarmine.*

Verse 4.—"*Make a joyful noise.*" Bless God for a Christ. The Argives when delivered by the Romans from the tyranny of the Macedonians and Spartans, *Quæ guadia, quæ vociferationes fuerunt! quid florum in Consulem profuderunt!* what great joys expressed they! what loud outcries made they! The very birds that flew over them fell to the ground, astonied at their noises. The crier at the Nemean games was forced to pronounce the word Liberty, *iterumque, iterumque,* again, and again.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 4—6.—Wherewith is God to be praised? In a *literal* sense with all kind of music: vocal, "*sing unto the Lord:*" chordal, "*Praise him upon the harp:*" pneumatical, "*with trumpets,*" etc. In an *allegorical* exposition (as *Euthymius* interprets it) we must praise God in our actions, and praise him in our contemplation; praise him in our words, praise him in our works; praise him in our life, praise him at our death; being not only *temples* (as Paul), but (as Clemens Alexandrinus calls us) *timbrels* also of the Holy Ghost. —*John Boys.*

Verse 5.—"*With the harp, with the harp.*" The repetition made use of is emphatical, and implies that the most ardent attempts men might make to celebrate the great work of the world's redemption would fall short of the riches of the grace of God.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 5.—"*The voice of a psalm.*" The sound of the Zimrah, זמרה, here, as in Psalm lxxxi. 2, is certainly the name of some musical instrument. But what the particular instrument might be, which went by that name, is quite uncertain.—*Samuel Horsley.*

5. "*The voice of a psalm.*" With psalms Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah celebrated their victories. Psalms made glad the heart of the exiles who returned from Babylon. Psalms gave courage and strength to the Maccabees

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in their brave struggles to achieve their country's independence, and were the repeated expression of their thanksgivings. The Lord of Psalmists and the Son of David, by the words of a psalm proved himself to be higher than David; and sang psalms with his apostles on the night before he suffered, when he instituted the holy supper of his love. With psalms Paul and Silas praised God in the prison at midnight when their feet were made fast in the stocks, and sang so loud that the prisoners heard them. And after his own example the apostle exhorts the Christians at Ephesus and Colossæ to teach and admonish one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Jerome tells us that in his day the psalms were to be heard in the fields and vineyards of Palestine, and that they fell sweetly on the ear, mingling with the songs of birds, and the scent of flowers in spring. The ploughman as he guided his plough chanted the hallelujah, and the reaper, the vine dresser, and the shepherd sang the songs of David. "These," he says, "are our love songs, these the instruments of our agriculture." Sidonius Apollinaris makes his boatmen, as they urge their heavily-laden barge up stream, sing psalms, till the river banks echo again with the hallelujah, and beautifully applies the custom, in a figure, to the voyage of the Christian life.—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

5.—"*The voice of a psalm.*" In D'Israeli's "Curiosities of Literature" there is a very curious piece upon psalm-singing, in which he mentions the spread of the singing of psalms in France, which was first started among the Romanists by the version of Clement Marot, the favoured bard of Francis the First. In Marot's dedication occur the following lines :—

"Thrice happy they, who may behold,
And listen in that age of gold!
As by the plough the labourer strays,
And carman 'mid the public ways,
And tradesman in his shop shall swell
Their voice in psalm or canticle,
Singing to solace toil; again
From woods shall come a sweeter strain!
Shepherd and shepherdess shall vie
In many a tender psalmody;
And the Creator's name prolong,
As rock and stream return their song!
Begin then, ladies fair! begin
The age renew'd that knows no sin!
And with light heart, that wants no wing,
Sing! from this holy song-book, sing!"

The singing of these psalms became so popular that D'Israeli suggests that "it first conveyed to the sullen fancy of the austere Calvin the project" of introducing the singing of psalms into his Genevan discipline. "This infectious frenzy of psalm-singing," as Warton almost blasphemously describes it, rapidly propagated itself through Germany as well as France, and passed over to England. D'Israeli says, with a sneer, that in the time of the Commonwealth, "Psalms were now sung at Lord Mayor's dinners and city feasts; soldiers sang them on their march and at parade; and few houses which had windows fronting the streets, but had their evening psalms." We can only add, would to God it were so again.

Verses 5, 6.—These were, literally, the instruments most in use among the Jews, and a spiritual signification has been attached to each instrument. They seem to me to represent the cardinal virtues, the *harp* implying prudence; the *psaltery*, justice; the *trumpet*, fortitude; and the *cornet*, temperance.—*Bellarmine.*

Verses 5, 6.—It is evident that the Psalmist here expresses the vehement and ardent affection which the faithful ought to have in praising God, when he enjoins musical instruments to be employed for this purpose. He would have nothing omitted by believers which tends to animate the minds and feelings of men in singing God's praises. The name of God, no doubt, can, properly

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speaking, be celebrated only by the articulate voice; but it is not without reason that David adds to this those aids by which believers were wont to stimulate themselves the more to this exercise; especially considering that he was speaking to God's ancient people. There is a distinction, however, to be observed here, that we may not indiscriminately consider as applicable to ourselves everything which was formerly enjoined upon the Jews. I have no doubt that playing upon cymbals, touching the harp and the viol, and all that kind of music which is so frequently mentioned in the psalms, was a part of the education; that is to say, the puerile instruction of the law: I speak of the stated service of the temple. For even now, if believers choose to cheer themselves with musical instruments, they should, I think, make it their object not to dissever their cheerfulness from the praises of God. But when they frequent their sacred assemblies, musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The Papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things from the Jews. Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise; but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the apostle is far more pleasing to him. Paul allows us to bless God in the public assembly of the saints only in a known tongue, 1 Cor. xiv. 16. The voice of man, although not understood by the generality, assuredly excels all inanimate instruments of music; and yet we see what Paul determines concerning speaking in an unknown tongue. What shall we then say of chanting, which fills the ears with nothing but an empty sound? Does any one object that music is very useful for awakening the minds of men and moving their hearts? I own it; but we should always take care that no corruption creep in, which might both defile the pure worship of God and involve men in superstition. Moreover, since the Holy Spirit expressly warns us of this danger by the mouth of Paul, to proceed beyond what we are there warranted by him, is not only, I must say, unadvised zeal, but wicked and perverse obstinacy.—*John Calvin.*

Verses 5, 6.—The song and the stringed instruments belonged to the Levites, and the trumpets to the priests alone. Kitto says the trumpets did not join in the concert, but were sounded during certain regulated pauses in the vocal and instrumental music. The harps and voices made the sweetness, while the trumpets and horns added the strength; melody and energy should combine in the worship of God.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 6.—"*Trumpets.*" חֲצֹצְרוֹת, *Chatsotseroth:* here only in the psalter. These were the straight trumpets (such as are seen on the Arch of Titus) used by the priests for giving signals. Numb. x. 2—10; 1 Chron. xv. 24, 28, etc. The *shofar*, שׁוֹפָר (*cornet*), was the ordinary curved trumpet, cornet, or horn. —*William Kay.*

Verse 6.—"*Trumpets.*" The word here used is uniformly rendered *trumpets* in the Scriptures, Num. x. 2, 8—10; xxxi. 6; *et al.* The trumpet was mainly employed for convening a public assembly for worship, or for assembling the hosts for battle. The original word, חֲצֹצְרָה, *chatsotserah*, is supposed to have been designed to imitate "the broken pulse-like sound of the trumpet, like the Latin, *taratantara.*" So the German *trarara*, and the Arabic, *haddâdera.* The word here used was given to the long, straight trumpet.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 6.—"*Trumpets.*" The trumpet served the same purpose, in a religious and civil sense, as bells among Christians, and the voice among Mohammedans. Indeed, it is understood that Mohammed directed the voice to be employed, in order to mark a distinction between his own sect and the Jews with their trumpets and the Christians with their bells.—*Kitto's Pictorial Bible.*

Verse 6.—"*With trumpets.*" Origen calls the writings of the evangelists and the apostles *trumpets*, at whose blast all the structures of idolatry and the dogmas of the philosophers were utterly overthrown. He teaches likewise that by the sound of the *trumpets* is prefigured the trumpet of the universal judgment, at which

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the world shall fall in ruin, and whose sound shall be joy to the just, and lamentation to the unjust.—*Lorinus.*

Verse 6.—"*Before the Lord, the King.*" Since it is distinctly added *before Jehovah the King*, and the words, *with trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise*, are used, there seems to be a reference to that public rejoicing commonly manifested at the coronation of kings, or the celebration of undertakings for the public safety. This idea is not foreign to the present passage, since Jehovah is represented as King and Saviour of the people.—*Venema.*

Verses 7, 8.—"*Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands.*"

And thou, majestic main!
A secret world of wonders in thyself,
Sound his stupendous praise, whose greater voice
Or bids you roar, or bids your roarings fall.

—*James Thomson.*

Verses 7, 8.—These appeals to nature in her great departments—of the sea in its mighty amplitude, and the earth with its floods and hills—form, not a warrant, but a call on Christian ministers to recognise God more in their prayers and sermons as the God of Creation, instead of restricting themselves so exclusively to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. Do the one, and not leave the other undone.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verses 7, 8.—The setting forth the praise of Christ for the redemption of sinners, may not only furnish work to all reasonable creatures; but also if every drop of water in the sea, and in every river and flood, every fish in the sea, every fowl of the air, every living creature on the earth, and whatsoever else is in the world: if they all had reason and ability to express themselves; yea, and if all the hills were able by motion and gesticulation to communicate their joy one to another; there is work for them all to set out the praise of Christ.—*David Dickson.*

Verses 7—9.—Matthew Henry on these verses quotes from Virgil's 4th Eclogue the verses (of which we subjoin Dryden's translation) in which the poet, he says, "either ignorantly or basely applies to Asinius Pollio the ancient prophecies which at that time were expected to be fulfilled;" adding that Ludovicus Vives thinks that these and many other things which Virgil says of this long looked-for child "are applicable to Christ."

O of celestial seed! O foster son of Jove!
See, lab'ring Nature calls thee to sustain
The nodding frame of heav'n, and earth, and main!
See to their base restor'd, earth, seas, and air;
And joyful ages, from behind, in crowding ranks appear.

Verse 8.—"*Let the floods clap their hands.*" The clapping of the hands being a token of delight and approbation, and the striking or dashing of the water in a river being, for the noise of it, a resemblance of that, *the rivers* are here said to *clap their hands.*—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 8.—Though the language be figurative, so far as it gives a voice to the inanimate creation in its various departments, yet, like all the figurative language of Scripture, it expresses a truth—that which the Apostle has stated without a metaphor in the express revelation that the "creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." And this because the reason of that bondage will no more exist. It is the consequence of sin: but when the world shall be subjected to the righteous rule of its coming King (as predicted in the last verse of this psalm), then earth and all creation shall own its present Lord, and join its tribute of praise to that of Israel and the nations, and the redeemed and glorified church. —*William De Burgh.*

Verse 9.—The Psalter is much occupied in celebrating *the benign fruits*

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which Christ's reign is to yield in all the earth. It will be a reign of HOLINESS. This is its proper and distinctive nature. Under it, the ends of the earth will fear God, and rejoice in his salvation. It will be a reign of JUSTICE. Under it, the wars and oppressions and cruelties, the unequal laws and iniquitous institutions that have so long vexed and cursed the world, shall find a place no more. This happy reformation is usually foretold in the form of a proclamation that the Lord is coming "*to judge the earth.*" It is important, therefore, to keep in mind the true sense and intention of that oft-repeated proclamation. It does not refer, as an unwary reader might suppose, to the Judgment of the Great Day. There is no terror in it. The psalms that have it for their principal burden are jubilant in the highest degree. The design of the proclamation is to announce Christ in the character of a Peaceful Prince coming to administer equal laws with an impartial hand, and so to cause wrong and contention to cease in the earth. This is Christ's manner of judging the earth. What he has already done in this direction enables us to form a clear conception of what he will yet set himself to do. When he designs to accomplish great and salutary reforms in the political and social institutions of a people, he begins by dislodging bad principles from men's minds and planting Scriptural principles in their stead; by purging evil passions from men's hearts, and baptising them with the Spirit of truth and justice, godliness and lovingkindness. A sure foundation having been thus laid for a better order of things, he will by some storm of controversy or of revolution sweep away the institutions in which injustice has entrenched itself, and will thus make it possible for righteousness to have free course. Oh wha a store of comfort for the down-trodden, the enslaved, the needy, is laid up in the announcement that the Lord is coming to be the avenger of all such! Well may all the creatures be invited to clap their hands for joy at the thought that he has taken this work in hand; that he sitteth upon the floods; and that the storms that agitate the nations are the chariot in which he rides to take possession of the earth, and make it an abode of righteousness and peace.—*William Binnie.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—"*A new song.*" The duty, beauty, and benefit of maintaining freshness in piety, service, and worship.

Verse 1.—"*He hath done marvellous things.*" I. He hath created a marvellous universe. II. He has established a marvellous government. III. He hath bestowed a marvellous gift. IV. He hath provided a marvellous redemption. V. He hath inspired a marvellous book. VI. He hath opened a marvellous fulness. VII. He hath effected a marvellous transformation.—*W. Jackson.*

Verse 1.—"*The victory.*" The victories of God in judgment, and in mercy: especially the triumphs of Christ on the cross, and by his Spirit in the heart, and in and by the church at large.

Verse 2.—"*The Lord hath made known his salvation.*" I. The contents of which it is composed. II. The reasons for which it has been provided. III. The price at which it has been procured. IV. The terms on which it shall be imparted. V. The way in which it must be propagated. VI. The manner in which its neglect will be punished.—*W. J.*

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—I. What is salvation? II. Why it is called the Lord's:—"Salvation is of the Lord." III. How he has made it known. IV. For what purpose. V. With what results.—*E. G. Gange.*

Verse 2.—The great privilege of knowing the gospel. I. *In what it consists.* 1. Revelation by the Bible. 2. Declaration by the minister. 3. Illumination

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by the Spirit. 4. Illustration in daily providence. II. *To what it has led.* 1. We have believed it. 2. We have so far understood it as to growingly rejoice in it. 3. We are able to tell it to others. 4. We abhor those who mystify it.

Verse 2.—Salvation's glory. I. It is divine—"his salvation." II. It is consistent with justice—"his righteousness." III. It is plain and simple—"openly showed." IV. It is meant for all sorts of men.—"heathen."

Verse 3 (*first clause*).—The Lord's memory of his covenant. Times in which he seems to forget it; ways in which even in those times he proves his faithfulness; great deeds of grace by which at other times he shows his memory of his promises; and reasons why he must ever be mindful of his covenant.

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—"*All the ends of the earth.*" I. Literally. Missionaries have visited every land. II. Spiritually. Men ready to despair, to perish. III. Prophetically. Dwell on the grand promises concerning the future, and the triumphs of the church.—*E. G. G.*

Verse 3.—"*All the ends of the earth have seen,*" &c. I. The greatest foreigners have seen it; many have "come from the east and the west;" Greeks, Peter's hearers, the Eunuch, Greenlanders, South Sea Islanders, Negroes, Red Indians, &c., &c. II. The ripest saints have seen it; they are at the right end of the earth, stepping out of the wilderness into Canaan, &c. III. The vilest sinners have seen it; those who have wandered so far that they could get no farther without stepping into hell. The dying thief. The woman who was a sinner. Those whom Whitefield called "the devil's castaways."—*W. J.*

Verse 4.—The right use of noise. I. "Make a noise." Awake, O sleeper. Speak, O dumb. II. "Make a joyful noise." The shout of deliverance, of gratitude, of gladness. III. "Make a loud noise, all the earth." Nature with her ten thousand voices. The church with myriad saints. IV. "Make a joyful noise unto God." Praise him alone. Praise him for ever.—*E. G. G.*

Verse 6.—Joy a needful ingredient of praise. The Lord as King, an essential idea in adoration. Expression in various ways incumbent upon us, when praising joyfully such a King.

Verses 7, 8.—Nature at worship. The congregation is—I. Vast. Sea, earth, rivers, hills. II. Varied. Diverse in character, word, aspect, each from the other, constant and alike in this alone, that *all, always* worship God. III. Gladsome. In this like the worshippers in heaven, and for the same reason—sin is absent.—*E. G. G.*

Verse 8.—The song of the sea, and the hallelujah of the hills.

Verse 9.—The last judgment as a theme for thankfulness.

Verse 9.—"*Before the Lord.*" Where we are, where our joy should be, where all our actions should be felt to be, where we shall be—"*before the Lord.*" Enquire—What are we before the Lord? What shall we be when he cometh?

WORK UPON THE NINETY-EIGHTH PSALM.

In "*The works of* JOHN BOYS," 1626, folio, pp. 34-6, there is a short exposition of this psalm.

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PSALM XCIX.

This may be called THE SANCTUS, *or,* THE HOLY, HOLY, HOLY PSALM, *for the word "holy" is the conclusion and the refrain of its three main divisions. Its subject is the holiness of the divine government, the sanctity of the mediatorial reign. It seems to us to declare the holiness of Jehovah himself in verses* 1, 2, 3 ; *it mentions the equity of the king whom the Lord had appointed, as an illustration of the Lord's love of holiness, or more probably it describes the Lord as himself the king, in verses* 4 *and* 5, *and it then sets forth the severely righteous character of God's dealings with those favoured persons whom in former times he had selected to approach him on behalf of the people,* 6—9. *It is a hymn fitted for the cherubim who surround the throne, who are mentioned in verse* 1 ; *it is a psalm most fitting for saints who dwell in Zion, the holy city, and especially worthy to be reverently sung by all who, like David the king, Moses the lawgiver, Aaron the priest, or Samuel the seer, are honoured to lead the church of God, and plead for her with her Lord.*

EXPOSITION.

THE LORD reigneth ; let the people tremble : he sitteth *between* the cherubims ; let the earth be moved.

2 The LORD *is* great in Zion; and he *is* high above all the people.

3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name ; *for* it *is* holy.

1. "*The* LORD *reigneth.*" One of the most joyous utterances which ever leaped from mortal lip. The overthrow of the reign of evil and the setting up of Jehovah's kingdom of goodness, justice, and truth, is worthy to be hymned again and again, as we have it here for the third time in the psalms. "*Let the people tremble.*" Let the chosen people feel a solemn yet joyful awe, which shall thrill their whole manhood. Saints quiver with devout emotion, and sinners quiver with terror when the rule of Jehovah is fully perceived and felt. It is not a light or trifling matter, it is a truth which, above all others, should stir the depths of our nature. "*He sitteth between the cherubims.*" In grandeur of sublime glory, yet in nearness of mediatorial condescension, Jehovah revealed himself above the mercy-seat, whereon stood the likeness of those flaming ones who gaze upon his glory, and for ever cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts." The Lord reigning on that throne of grace which is sprinkled with atoning blood, and veiled with the covering wings of mediatorial love, is above all other revelations wonderful, and fitted to excite emotion among all mankind, hence it is added, "*Let the earth be moved.*" Not merely "the people," but the whole earth should feel a movement of adoring awe when it is known that on the mercy-seat God sits as universal monarch. The pomp of heaven surrounds him, and is symbolised by the outstretched wings of waiting cherubs ; let not the earth be less moved to adoration, rather let all her tribes bow before his infinite majesty, yea, let the solid earth itself with reverent tremor acknowledge his presence.

2. "*The* LORD *is great in Zion.*" Of old the temple's sacred hill was the centre of the worship of the great King, and the place where his grandeur was most clearly beheld : his church is now his favoured palace, where his greatness is displayed, acknowledged, and adored. He there unveils his attributes and commands the lowliest homage ; the ignorant forget him, the wicked despise him, the atheistical oppose him, but among his own chosen he is great beyond comparison. He is great in the esteem of the gracious, great in his acts of mercy, and really great in himself : great in mercy, power, wisdom, justice, and

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glory. "*And he is high above all the people;*" towering above their highest thoughts and loftiest conceptions. The highest are not high to him, yet, blessed be his name, the lowliest are not despised by him. In such a God we rejoice, his greatness and loftiness are exceedingly delightful in our esteem; the more he is honoured and exalted in the hearts of men, the more exultant are his people. If Israel delighted in Saul because he was head and shoulders above the people, how much more should we exult in our God and King, who is as high above us as the heavens are above the earth.

3. "*Let them praise thy great and terrible name:*" let all the dwellers in Zion and all the nations upon the earth praise the Lord, or "acknowledge thankfully" the goodness of his divine nature, albeit that there is so much in it which must inspire their awe. Under the most terrible aspect the Lord is still to be praised. Many profess to admire the milder beams of the sun of righteousness, but burn with rebellion against its more flaming radiance: so it ought not to be: we are bound to praise a terrible God and worship him who casts the wicked down to hell. Did not Israel praise him "who overthrew Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea, for his mercy endureth for ever." The terrible Avenger is to be praised, as well as the loving Redeemer. Against this the sympathy of man's evil heart with sin rebels; it cries out for an effeminate God in whom pity has strangled justice. The well-instructed servants of Jehovah praise him in all the aspects of his character, whether terrible or tender. Grace streaming from the mercy-seat can alone work in us this admirable frame of mind. "*For it is holy,*" or "*He is holy.*" In him is no flaw or fault, excess or deficiency, error or iniquity. He is wholly excellent, and is therefore called holy. In his words, thoughts, acts, and revelations as well as in himself, he is perfection itself. O come let us worship and bow down before him.

4 The king's strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.

5 Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; *for* he *is* holy.

4. "*The king's strength also loveth judgment.*" God is the king, the mercy-seat is his throne, and the sceptre which he sways is holy like himself. His power never exerts itself tyrannically; he is a sovereign, and he is absolute in his government, but his might delights in right, his force is used for just purposes only. Men in these days are continually arraigning the Lord's government, and setting up to judge whether he does right or not; but saintly men in the olden time were of another mind, they were sure that what the Lord did was just, and instead of calling him to account they humbly submitted themselves to his will, rejoicing in the firm persuasion that with his whole omnipotence God was pledged to promote righteousness, and work justice among all his creatures. "*Thou dost establish equity.*" Not a court of equity merely, but equity itself thou dost set up, and that not for a time or upon an occasion, but as an established institution, stable as thy throne. Not even for the sake of mercy does the Lord remove or injure the equity of his moral government: both in providence and in grace he is careful to conserve the immaculate purity of his justice. Most kingdoms have an establishment of some kind, and generally it is inequitable; here we have an establishment which is equity itself. The Lord our God demolishes every system of injustice, and right alone is made to stand. "*Thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.*" Justice is not merely established, but executed in God's kingdom; the laws are carried out, the executive is as righteous as the legislative. Herein let all the oppressed, yea, and all who love that which is right, find large occasion for praise. Other nations under their despots were the victims and the perpetrators of grievous wrong, but when the tribes were faithful to the Lord

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they enjoyed an upright government within their own borders, and acted with integrity towards their neighbours. That kingcraft which delights in cunning, favouritism, and brute force is as opposite to the divine kingship as darkness to light. The palace of Jehovah is no robber's fortress nor despot's castle, built on dungeons, with stones carved by slaves, and cemented with the blood of toiling serfs. The annals of most human governments have been written in the tears of the downtrodden, and the curses of the oppressed: the chronicles of the Lord's kingdom are of another sort, truth shines in each line, goodness in every syllable, and justice in every letter. Glory be to the name of the King, whose gentle glory beams from between the cherubic wings.

5. "*Exalt ye the* LORD *our God.*" If no others adore him, let his own people render to him the most ardent worship. Infinite condescension makes him stoop to be called *our* God, and truth and faithfulness bind him to maintain that covenant relationship; and surely we, to whom by grace he so lovingly gives himself, should exalt him with all our hearts. He shines upon us from under the veiling wings of cherubim, and above the seat of mercy, therefore let us come *and worship at his footstool.* When he reveals himself in Christ Jesus, as our reconciled God, who allows us to approach even to his throne, it becomes us to unite earnestness and humility, joy and adoration, and, while we exalt him, prostrate ourselves in the dust before him. Do we need to be thus excited to worship? How much ought we to blush for such backwardness! It ought to be our daily delight to magnify so good and great a God. "*For he is holy.*" A second time the note rings out, and as the ark, which was the divine footstool, has just been mentioned, the voice seems to sound forth from the cherubim where the Lord sitteth, who continually do cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth!" Holiness is the harmony of all the virtues. The Lord has not one glorious attribute alone, or in excess, but all glories are in him as a whole; this is the crown of his honour and the honour of his crown. His power is not his choicest jewel, nor his sovereignty, but his holiness. In this all comprehensive moral excellence he would have his creatures take delight, and when they do so their delight is evidence that their hearts have been renewed, and they themselves have been made partakers of his holiness. The gods of the heathen were, according to their own votaries, lustful, cruel, and brutish; their only claim to reverence lay in their supposed potency over human destinies: who would not far rather adore Jehovah, whose character is unsullied purity, unswerving justice, unbending truth, unbounded love, in a word, perfect holiness?

6 Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD, and he answered them.

7 He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance *that* he gave them.

8 Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.

9 Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God *is* holy.

6. "*Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name.*" Though not ordained to the typical priesthood, Moses was a true priest, even as Melchizedek had been before him. God has ever had a priesthood beside and above that of the law. The three holy men here mentioned all stood in his courts, and saw his holiness, each one after his own order. Moses saw the Lord in flaming fire revealing his perfect law, Aaron full often watched the sacred fire devour the sin-offering, and Samuel witnessed the judgment of the Lord on Eli's house, because of the error of his

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way. These each one stood in the gap when the wrath of God broke forth, because his holiness had been insulted; and acting as intercessors, they screened the nation from the great and terrible God, who otherwise would in a dreadful manner have executed judgment in Jacob. Let these men, or such as these, lead us in our worship, and let us approach the Lord at the mercy-seat as they did, for he is as accessible to us as to them. They made it their life's business to call upon him in prayer, and by so doing brought down innumerable blessings upon themselves and others. Does not the Lord call us also to come up into the mount with Moses, and to enter the most holy place with Aaron? Do we not hear him call us by our name as he did Samuel? And do we not answer, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth"? "*They called upon the* LORD, *and he answered them.*" Not in vain were their prayers; but being a holy God he was true to his promises, and hearkened to them from off the mercy-seat. Here is reason for praise, for answers to the petitions of some are proofs of God's readiness to hear others. These three men asked large things, they pleaded for a whole nation, and they stayed great plagues and turned away fiery wrath; who would not exercise himself in adoring so great and merciful a God? If he were unholy he would be false to his word and refuse his people's cries; this, then, is recorded for our joy and for his glory, that holy men of old were not suffered to pray in vain.

7. "*He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar.*" We have had mention of the ark and the shekinah, and now of the fiery cloudy pillar, which was another visible token of the presence of God in the midst of Israel. Responses came to Moses and Aaron out of that glorious overshadowing cloud, and though Samuel saw it not, yet to him also came the mystic voice which was wont to thunder forth from that divine canopy. Men have had converse with God, let men therefore speak to God in return. He has told us things to come, let us in return confess the sins which are past; he has revealed his mind to us, let us then pour out our hearts before him. "*They kept his testimonies.*" When others turned aside they were faithful; in their hearts they laid up his word, and in their lives they obeyed it. When he spake to them they observed his will, and therefore when they spake to him he yielded to their desires. This keeping of the divine testimonies is a virtue all too rare in these our days; men run after their own views and opinions, and make light of the truth of God; hence it is that they fail in prayer, and scoffers have even dared to say that prayer avails not at all. May the good Lord bring back his people to reverence his word, and then will he also have respect unto the voice of their cry. "*And the ordinance that he gave them.*" His practical precept they observed as well as his doctrinal instruction. Ordinances are not to be trifled with, or testimonies will also be despised; and the converse is also true, a light estimate of inspired dogma is sure to end in neglect of moral virtues. To Moses, Aaron, and Samuel special and personal charges were committed, and they were all true to their trust, for they stood in awe of the Lord, their God, and worshipped him with their whole souls. They were very different men, and had each one a work to do peculiar to himself, yet because each was a man of prayer they were all preserved in their integrity, fulfilled their office, and blessed their generation. Lord, teach us like Moses to hold up our hands in prayer and conquer Amalek, like Aaron to wave the censer between the living and the dead till the plague is stayed, and like Samuel to say to a guilty people, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you;" if thou wilt make us mighty with thee in prayer, we shall also be kept faithful before thee in the service which thou hast laid upon us.

8. "*Thou answeredst them, O* LORD *our God.*" A sweet title and a cheering fact. Our covenant God in a very special manner heard his three servants when they pleaded for the people. "*Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.*" He forgave the sinners, but he slew their sins. Some apply this verse to Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, and remind us that each of these fell into a fault and received chastisement.

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Of Samuel they assert that, for having set up his sons as his successors, he was compelled to submit to the anointing of Saul as king, which was a great grief to him: this is to our mind a very doubtful statement, and leads us to abandon the interpretation altogether. We believe that the passage refers to the nation which was spared through the intercession of these three holy men, but yet was severely chastened for its transgressions. In answer to the cry of Moses the tribes lived on, but the then existing generation could not enter Canaan: Aaron's golden calf was broken, though the fire of the Lord did not consume the people; and Israel smarted under the harsh government of Saul, though at Samuel's request its murmurings against the theocratic rule of their fathers' God was not visited with pestilence or famine. So to forgive sin as at the same time to express abhorrence of it, is the peculiar glory of God, and is best seen in the atonement of our Lord Jesus. Reader, are you a believer? Then your sin is forgiven you; but so surely as you are a child of God the rod of paternal discipline will be laid upon you if your walk be not close with God. "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities."

9. "*Exalt the* LORD *our God.*" A second time the delightful title of Jehovah our God is used, and it is quickly followed by a third. The Psalm is Trinitarian in its whole structure. In each of his sacred persons the Lord is the God of his people; the Father is ours, the Son is ours, and the Holy Spirit is ours: let us exalt him with all our ransomed powers. "*And worship at his holy hill.*" Where he appoints his temple let us resort. No spot of ground is now fenced about as peculiarly holy, or to be regarded as more sacred than another; yet his visible church is his chosen hill, and there would we be found, numbered with his people, and unite with them in worship. "*For the* LORD *our God is holy.*" Again this devout description is repeated, and made the climax of the song. Oh for hearts made pure within, so that we may rightly perceive and worthily praise the infinite perfection of the Triune Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—This psalm has three parts, in which the Lord is celebrated as He who is to come, as He who is, and as He who was.—*John Albert Bengel*, 1687—1752.

Whole Psalm.—In each of the three strophes Jehovah is acknowledged in his peculiar covenant relation to his people. In the first he is "great in *Zion*" (ver. 2); in the second, he has "executed righteousness in *Jacob*" (ver. 4); and he is "Jehovah *our* God" (ver. 5); in the third, the great examples of this covenant relationship are cited from Israel's ancient history; and again God is twice claimed as "Jehovah *our* God" (ver. 8 and 9).—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Whole Psalm.—There are *three* psalms which begin with the words, "The LORD (JEHOVAH) reigneth." (Pss. xciii., xcvii., xcix.) This is the third and last of these psalms; and it is remarkable that in this psalm the words "*He is holy*" are repeated *three* times (verses 3, 5, 9). Thus this psalm is one of the links in the chain which connects the first revelation of God in Genesis with the full manifestation of the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, which is revealed in the commission of the risen Saviour to his apostles: "Go ye, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," and which prepares the faithful to join in the heavenly Hallelujah of the church glorified, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." The other links in this chain in the Old Testament are, the Aaronic benediction, in Num. vi. 24—27; and the Seraphic Trisagion, in Isa. vi. 1—3.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Whole Psalm.—Many of the preceding psalms, in extolling the Dominion

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and Supremacy of the Messiah, have spoken of him solely as the object of triumph and rejoicing. He has been represented in all the bounteousness of his mercy, and the excess of his lovingkindness; and the ideas of might and majesty, with which he has been accompanied, seem chiefly to have been regarded as the means by which these gracious designs will be carried into a sure effect. There is always a great danger in such a feeling, lest our *reciprocal* covenant should be too much forgotten; and we should rest on our privileges to the exclusion of our practice. This was a constant error to the Jews. "We have Abraham to our Father," was continually on their lips; as if the given promise to their nation had been inalienable for ever. Subsequent ages have shown the existence of the same false principle amongst the Gentiles. It is a part of the weakness of human nature; and hence was the prophet inspired to warn the world of the evil, and draw their minds to a just sense of the *awfulness* of the Redeemer's majesty. In this view, joined as it is throughout with assertions of his readiness at all times to listen to the believer and to grant his supplication, the psalm is at once of great power and of an exceeding consolation.—*William Hill Tucker.*

Verse 1.—"*Let the people tremble . . . let the earth be moved.*" That fear which proceeds from simple reverence as well as that which arises from apprehension of evil, produces bodily shaking. Thus this exhortation may concern believing as well as unbelieving nations.—*Amyraldus.*

Verse 1.—"*Let the people tremble.*" He bids a defiance, as it were, to all his enemies, ὀργιζεσθωσαν, *irascantur, commoveantur, fremant populi;* let the people be angry, fret, and be unquiet, as Psal. ii. 1. "*Let the earth,*" that is, the tyrants of the earth, be moved at it; yet let them know that all their endeavours are but vain.—*William Nicholson.*

Verse 1.—"*Let the people tremble.*" Jarchi refers this to the war of Gog and Magog.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—"*Let the people tremble.*" Albeit the church be compassed about with enemies, as the lily among the thorns, yet because her Lord reigneth in the midst of her, she hath reason not only to comfort herself in him, but also hath ground of defying her enemies, and boasting against them: "*The* LORD *reigneth; let the people tremble.*" The Lord's people do not worship an unknown God, they know who he is, and where to find him; to wit, in his ordinances, on the throne of grace, reconciling himself to the world in Christ: "*He sitteth between the cherubims.*"—*David Dickson.*

Verse 1.—"*The cherubims.*" These were figures, or representations of angels, inclining their faces one towards the other, and touching one another with their wings. Ex. xxv. 18. The use of these was to cover or overshadow the *mercy-seat* with their wings, ver. 20, and from this *seat* God used to speak unto Moses, ver. 22; Num. vii. 8, 9. Which may be applied unto Christ, whose mediation was signified by the *mercy-seat;* whence it is said, that *he is a propitiation* or covering mercy-seat, Rom. iii. 25; 1 John ii. 2; iv. 10, because by his obedience all our unrighteousness is covered.—*Thomas Wilson* (—1621), *in* "*A Complete Christian Dictionary,*" 1678.

Verse 1.—"*He sitteth between the cherubims.*" Our friend Mr. Charles Stanford, in his delicious work, "Symbols of Christ," has beautifully brought out the connection between the 37th and 38th verses of Matt. xxiii. The house was left desolate because Christ, who was set forth by the symbol of shelter, was rejected by them, and was not permitted to cover them with his wings. It was customary for the Jews to say of a proselyte, "He has taken refuge under the wings of the Shekinah." We now see that to take shelter under the wings of the Shekinah is to hide beneath the wings of Christ. Beneath that living shield which beats back the destroying stroke, and is broad enough to canopy a fugitive world, we take shelter, and there the promise is fulfilled, "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust."

Verse 1.—"*He sitteth between the cherubims.*" *The cherubim* is the seat of

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God, as the scripture sheweth us, a certain exalted heavenly throne, which we see not; but the word of God knoweth it, knoweth it as his own seat: and the word of God and the Spirit of God hath itself revealed to the servants of God where God sitteth. Not that God doth sit, as doth man, but thou, if thou dost wish that God sit in thee, if thou wilt be good, shalt be the seat of God; for thus is it written, "*The soul of the righteous is the seat of wisdom*" [Septuagint translation]. For a throne is in our language called a seat. For some, conversant with the Hebrew tongue, have interpreted cherubim in the Latin language (for it is a Hebrew term) by the words fulness of knowledge. Therefore, because God surpasseth all knowledge, he is said to sit above the fulness of knowledge. Let there be therefore in thee fulness of knowledge, and even thou shalt be the throne of God.—*Augustine.*

Verse 1.—"*Let the earth be moved.*" Those that submit to him shall be established, and not "*moved.*" Psal. xcvi. 10; but they that oppose him will be moved. Heaven and earth shall be shaken, and all nations; but the kingdom of Christ cannot be moved. The "things which cannot be shaken shall remain," Heb. xii. 27.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2.—"*He is high above all the people.*" The metaphor is taken from such great objects as trees, animals, palaces, towers, which are the more valued, and are regarded as possessing the greater strength, the higher they rise above others. So Deut. i. 28; ii. 10, 21; ix. 2, Concerning the Canaanites and the giants.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 3.—"*Let them praise thy great and terrible name,*" etc. Although the enemies of the Church of God are in a tumult, and the whole earth is moved, do you nevertheless with joyful spirit entrust your salvation to him, and acknowledge and diligently celebrate his power displayed in the defence of his people and the overthrow of his foes.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 3.—"*Thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.*" The FATHER's name is "*great,*" for he is the source, the Creator, the Lord of all; the SON's name is "*terrible,*" for he is to be our judge; the name of the HOLY GHOST is "*holy,*" for he it is who bestows hallowing and sanctification. The Hebrew commentators see here the mystic Tetragrammaton יהוה, whose true pronunciation was kept a profound secret by the Rabbins, owing to a feeling of awful reverence; while the Greeks are precise in bidding us take it of that name, which is "*terrible*" to God's enemies, "*holy*" to his friends, and "*great*" to both, the name of JESUS.—*Hugo Cardinalis, Genebrardus, and Balthazar Corderius, in Neale's Commentary.*

Verse 3.—"*Let them praise thy terrible name.*" What force the experience of a burdened conscience attaches to the expression, "Thy great and *terrible* name; for it is holy!" The misery of sin consists not merely in its consequences, but in its very nature, which is to separate between God and our souls, and to shut us out from God, and God from us. Yet the Spirit of God indicates, in the covenant of grace, a threefold practical influence of his holiness upon us, of which the issue is the opposite of despair. The various steps are marked as praise, exaltation, and worship (verses 3, 5, 9). Of these the last seems by far the most difficult to realise. For it is in the nature of conscious sin to prevent even our approaches to God, to keep us from all comfortable fellowship with God, and to fill us with a heavy sense of our infinite and almost hopeless distance from him. Yet we will "*praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.*" Great it is; most glorious and high; far above all human conceptions. Viewed in this light, even the fact otherwise so consoling, "The Lord reigneth," leads only to the inference, "Let the people tremble;" and "He sitteth between the cherubim" (or manifesteth himself as the covenant God) to the conclusion, "Let the earth be moved," or *stagger.* But his name is not only great and terrible in its manifestations, "it is holy," and *therefore* we "praise" it. His greatness is all arrayed on the side of good-

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ness, his power on that of righteousness and truth.—*Alfred Edersheim, in "The Golden Diary of Heart Converse with Jesus in the Book of Psalms,"* 1873.

Verse 3.—"*Thy terrible name . . . . holy.*" In acts of man's vindictive justice, there is something of impurity, perturbation, passion, some mixture of cruelty; but none of these fall upon God in the several acts of wrath. When God appears to Ezekiel in the resemblance of fire, to signify his anger against the house of Judah for their idolatry, "from his loins downward there was the appearance of fire, but from the loins upward the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber." Ezek. viii. 2. His heart is clean in his most terrible acts of vengeance; it is a pure flame wherewith he scorcheth and burns his enemies. He is holy in the most fiery appearance.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 3.—"*It is holy.*" No attribute is sounded out so loftily, with such solemnity, and so frequently by angels that stand before his throne, as this. Where do you find any other attribute trebled in the praises of it as this? Isaiah vi. 3: "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory;" and Rev. iv. 8: "The four living creatures rest not day and night saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," &c. His power of sovereignty as Lord of hosts is but once mentioned, but with a ternal repetition of his holiness. Do you hear in any evangelical song any other perfection of the divine nature thrice repeated? Where do we read of the crying out, Eternal, eternal, eternal; or Faithful, faithful, faithful, Lord God of hosts! Whatsoever other attribute is left out, this God would have to fill the mouths of angels and blessed spirits for ever in heaven. . . . . As it seems to challenge an excellency above all his other perfections, so it is the glory of all the rest; as it is the glory of the Godhead, so it is the glory of every perfection in the Godhead; as his power is the strength of them, so his holiness is the beauty of them; as all would be weak without almightiness to back them, so all would be uncomely without holiness to adorn them: should this be sullied all the rest would lose their honour and their comfortable efficacy; as at the same instant that the sun should lose its light, it would lose its heat, its strength, its generative and quickening virtue. As sincerity is the lustre of every grace in a Christian, so is purity the splendour of every attribute in the Godhead. His justice is a holy justice, his wisdom a holy wisdom, his arm of power a "holy arm," Psalm xcviii. 1; his truth or promise a "holy promise," Psalm cv. 42. *Holy* and *true* go hand and hand, Rev. vi. 10. "His *name*," which signifies all his attributes in conjunction, "*is holy.*"—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 4.—"*The king's strength.*" They will remember his strength with joy, because he "*loveth judgment,*" and there is no reason, therefore, to be afraid of him in consequence of his great strength, so long as they continue to walk in the good way.—*George Phillips.*

Verses 4, 5.—Our King *loveth righteousness:* he will execute perfect justice, tempered with perfect mercy. He will judge every man according to his works, summing up and completing the unnoticed righteousness of his providence by an open manifestation to the universe of his holiness and equity. "We believe that he will come to be our judge," therefore let us magnify and exalt him with our lips and hearts; and let us fall down and worship the man Christ Jesus, who took our nature, even his manhood, from the earth, which is his footstool, into the eternity of the Godhead, in which he is equal to the Father. As heaven, which is the throne of God, and earth, which is his footstool, form one universe, so is God and man one Christ, the everlasting Lord, "holy and true," in whom we sinners may appeal from the throne of eternal justice to the footstool of eternal mercy.—"*Plain Commentary.*"

Verse 5 (*second clause*).—Mark the peculiar expression, "*Worship at his footstool.*" What humility and subjection does it imply! It is the worship of one whose heart has been subdued by divine grace.—*W. Wilson.*

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Verse 5.—Bishop Horsley thus renders this verse :—

> "Exalt ye Jehovah our God,
> And make prostration before his foostool ;
> *It is holy.*"

Thus he connects "holy" with Jehovah's footstool, mentioned in the preceding clause. There appears to me great propriety and beauty in this construction, which divides the poem into three members. Of these the first terminates with ascribing "holiness" to the *name* of Jehovah : the second, with ascribing the same property to his *abode:* and then, at the conclusion of the hymn, "holiness," essential holiness, is ascribed to Jehovah himself. Our Bible marginal translation recognizes this construction of the 5th verse.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 6.—"*Moses and Aaron among his priests,*" or chief *officers*, as in 1 Chron. xviii. 17. Moses was, if not a priest, yet a continual intercessor for the people, and a type of Christ the great Mediator of his church. *Aben-Ezra* called him *Cohen haccohanim*, the priest of priests ; and *Philo*, writing his life, concludeth, This was the life and death of Moses the king, the lawgiver, the prophet, and the chief priest.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 6.—*Moses* twice performed acts essentially priestly (Ex. xxiv. and xl. 22, compared with Leviticus viii.), at the ratification of the covenant, and at the consecration of the priests. For this reason he could the more readily be placed here among the priestly mediators.—*C. B. Moll.*

Verse 6.—"*Priests.*" The word *cohen* is not confined as a title to the priests of the Levitical order, it is applied to Melchizedek and others. Moses is included among God's priests in accordance with the true idea of a priest, as being the official exponent of the divine love and mercy—one who represented God though acting in the interests of man.—*Robert Baker Girdlestone, in "Synonyms of the Old Testament."*

Verse 6.—"*His priests.*" At the foundation of this there is another spiritual idiom, that, namely, according to which all are called priests who possess what constitutes the essence of the ordinary priestly office (although not the externals), inward connection with God, free access to the throne of grace, and the gift and power of intercessory prayer. This figurative idiom occurs even in the law itself, compare Exodus xix. 6, where it is said to all Israel, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of *priests*, and an holy nation."—*F. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 6.—*Priests.* The word *cohen*, Priest, is from *cahan*, *to plead a cause*, as an intercessor, mediator, or advocate ; hence the strict propriety of its use here in reference to Moses.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 6.—"*Them that call upon his name.*" The Hebrew word which we translate to *call* upon God, notes a sort of men whose chief business or trade was to call upon or invocate the name of God, and in this instance it implies that it was the special calling of these men to call upon God.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verses 6—9.—This third strophe is in reality a prophetical picture of the future holy worship of God, in which Moses, Aaron, and Samuel appear as the living representatives of the redeemed church, like the four and twenty elders in the more fully developed Apocalyptic scene of St. John. Rev. v.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 7.—"*They kept his testimonies.*" For this reason they were so promptly heard, even as the Lord himself says, "If a man love me he will keep my words," and again, "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." "*And the ordinance that he gave them.*" They not only observed the precepts which bind men in general, but the peculiar obligation of governing, directing, and teaching the people committed to them.—*Bellarmine.*

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Verse 8.—The construction of the verse seems to be this:—"O Lord our God, thou didst hear or answer them," that is, the aforementioned typical mediators, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel: "thou becamest a forbearing God for them," or, at their intercession; and that "even when punishing," or, when thou hadst begun to punish "the wicked deeds of them," that is, not of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, but of the people, who had transgressed, and for whom they interceded. This was the case when Moses interceded for the idolaters, Exod. xxii. 32, Aaron for the schismatics, Numb. xvi. 47, and Samuel for the whole nation, 1 Sam. vii. 9.—*George Horne.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou answeredst them . . . . forgavest them.*" Oh, the blessed assurance that nothing can disturb our standing in the covenant. Answer and forgiveness are certain, though vengeance is taken of our inventions. How every word and expression here seems to go right to our hearts! The very designation of our sins and punishments is so true. Yet, withal, we are not shut out from God. We are able to speak to, and to hear him; we receive what we need, and much more; and, above all, we have the sweet, abiding sense of forgiveness, notwithstanding "our inventions." When we smart under chastisements or disappointments, we know that it is the fire which burns up the hay, wood, and stubble—a Father's dealings in compassion and mercy. We willingly, we gladly take these chastisements, which now are to us fresh pledges of our safety. For safe, eternally safe, remains the foundation, and unclosed the way of access. O surely with all our heart do we accord: "*Exalt Jehovah our God, and worship at his holy hill; for Jehovah our God is holy.*"—*Alfred Edersheim.*

Verse 8.—The words of this verse have in them three remarkable particulars. I. The behaviour of the men it speaks of, which is partly good, and partly evil. The former verse saith, "*They kept God's testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them;*" this insinuates (what was also expressed, ver. 6) that they used to *call upon God;* all this was very good. But withal they did sometimes some things amiss, they had some inventions, by-paths, and steps awry, which, as they needed pardon, so they occasionally incensed him so much against them that he would not let them escape altogether, without taking some vengeance for such untowardness. II. God's graciousness in a double respect: 1, in *answering them*, granting their suits and supplications ordinarily. 2. In *forgiving them*, pardoning their failings and faults evermore; never dealing with them altogether according to their sins, but in the midst of any offence of theirs, or judgment of his, remembering mercy. III. His holy justice, notwithstanding, *taking vengeance on their inventions;* chastening them for some faults sometimes, and not letting them always go unpunished, how faithful soever they were generally, or how gracious soever he was eternally.—*Herbert Palmer* (1601—1647), *in a Sermon entitled "The Glass of God's Providence."* 1644.

Verse 8.—"*Thou wast a God that forgavest them,*" literally "*for* them;" on account of their intercessions. God did not destroy those for whom his devoted servants pleaded, in the day of threatened vengeance. Their sins, indeed, he visited with the rod of divine chastisement; but their forfeited lives he spared in answer to prayer.—*John Morison.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou . . . . forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.*" Because he loves the person, and hates only the sin; therefore he preserves the one, destroys only the other. This is all the fruit, to take away his sin. The covenant that is made with us in Christ is not a covenant made with works, but with persons; and therefore, though the works be often hateful, yet he goes on to love the persons; and that he may continue to love them, destroys out of them what he hates, but cutteth not them off. A member that is leprous or ulcerous, a man loves it as it is "his own flesh," Eph. v. 29, though he loathes the corruption and putrefaction that is in it; and therefore he doth not presently cut it off, but purgeth it daily, lays plasters to it to eat the corruption out: whereas a wart or even a wen that grows to a

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man's body, a man gets it cut off, for he doth not reckon it as his flesh.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.*" It is not a light punishment, but a "*vengeance,*" "he takes on their inventions;" to manifest that he hates sin as sin, and not because the worst persons commit it. Perhaps, had a profane man touched the ark, the hand of God had not so suddenly reached him. But when Uzzah, a man zealous for him, as may be supposed by his care for the support of the tottering ark, would step out of his place, he strikes him down for his disobedient action, by the side of the ark, which he would indirectly (as not being a Levite) sustain, 2 Sam. vi. 7. Nor did our Saviour so sharply reprove the Pharisees, and turn so short from them as he did from Peter, when he gave a carnal advice, and contrary to that wherein was to be the greatest manifestation of God's holiness, viz., the death of Christ, Matt. xvi. 23. He calls him Satan, a name sharper than the title of the devil's children, wherewith he marked the Pharisees, and given (besides him) to none but Judas, who made a profession of love to him, and was outwardly ranked in the number of his disciples. A gardener hates a weed the more for being in the bed with the most precious flowers.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 8.—"*Thou tookest vengeance.*" Sometimes the sins of a people may be such, that God will not pardon them as to temporal punishments; nay, not the godly themselves. Even they may have been partakers with others in their sins, or may have so provoked God themselves, and sinned in such a way as to cause his name to be blasphemed; so that he is concerned in honour to bring some exemplary punishment upon them. So it was with David (2 Sam. xii.): though he pardoned him as to the guilt of eternal death, saved his soul, and spared his life, which was forfeited to divine justice for the murder of Uriah; yet the prophet announced that sharp afflictions must come on him, the sword must never "depart from his house," and the child begotten in adultery must die, and his wives must be given to his neighbours. So, in Psalm xcix. 8, it seems to be spoken of Moses himself, and other godly among the Israelites who died in the wilderness, and were not permitted to come into the land of promise, that "*God forgave them,*" yet "*took vengeance of their inventions.*"—*John Collins* (—1687) *in the Morning Exercises.*

Verse 8.—"*Vengeance of their inventions.*" It is remarkable, that in the preceding verses mention is made of Moses, and Aaron, and Samuel in a way which seems to imply that they were upon the psalmist's mind when he uttered the declaration of the text. These three persons, all eminent for their piety, were also conspicuous for having suffered the Divine displeasure on account of their failings. Moses angered the Lord at the waters of strife, and he is not suffered to enter the promised land; Aaron provoked the Divine anger by making the golden calf, and would have been destroyed, had not Moses by fervent intercession turned away the anger of the Lord lest he should destroy him; so Samuel placed his sons over Israel, who walked not in his ways, and therefore God gave Israel a king, whose crimes caused the prophet to go down with sorrow to the grave.—*Stephen Bridge,* 1852.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—I. The doctrine of divine sovereignty enunciated. II. The apprehension of divine sovereignty demanded. It ought to be *spiritually* apprehended. God wants to be King in the *hearts* of men. All mortals must tremble before the Immortal; especially the wicked. III. The accessories of divine sovereignty hinted at. Sovereignty never forsakes the mercy-seat. Angels are represented on the mercy-seat, the ministers of sovereignty. IV. The effect of divine sovereignty described. Men should be "moved" to

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fear and obey the King before whom angels bow. Men should be moved to seek the mercy which angels study.—*William Durban.*

Verse 1.—"*He sitteth between the cherubims,*" etc. I. Statement made; where God dwells, on the mercy-seat. To hear prayer, and confession, and to grant salvation. II. Effect produced—"Earth moved;" to admiration, to prayer, to sorrowful contrition, to draw near, etc.—*E. G. Gange.*

Verse 2.—I. God is great in Zion *in Himself*, all his perfections are here, which cannot be said of creation, or of his Law, or of the heaven of angels. II. Great in his works of *saving* sinners, which he cannot do elsewhere. III. Great in his glory as displayed in *redemption* through his Son. IV. Great in his *love* to his redeemed.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—"*The Lord is great in Zion.*" I. In the condescension he displays —Zion is his "habitation," his "rest." II. In the glory he manifests—power and glory are in the sanctuary, Ps. lxiii. 2. III. In the assemblage he draws. "Every one in Zion appeareth before God," Ps. lxxxiv. 7. IV. In the blessings he imparts. V. In the authority he exerts.—*W. Jackson.*

Verse 3.—The terrors of the Lord, connected with holiness, and worthy of praise.

Verse 4.—I. Trace the process of the working of right principles through three stages—Love, Establishment, Execution. II. Illustrate from God's character and action. III. Apply to national, and to daily, life.—*C. D.*

Verse 5.—"*Exalt the Lord your God.*" I. Why? For what he is to you. For what he has done for you. For what he has told you. II. How? In your affection. In your meditation. In your supplication. In your conversation. In your profession. In your consecration. In your co-operation. In your expectation.—*W. J.*

Verse 5.—I. The loyal enthusiasm of worship, it exalts the Lord. II. The humble diffidence of worship, not aspiring to his exaltation it kneels at his footstool. III. The good reason for worship.—"He is holy."—*C. D.*

Verses 6, 7.—I. Prayer offered. Moses the prophet, Aaron the priest, Samuel the ruler, "They called," &c. II. Prayer answered. "He answered them," "he spake," &c. III. Prayer vindicated. They kept the other testimonies, &c.—*G. R.*

Verse 7 (first clause).—The revelation of the cloud, or what God foreshadowed to Israel in the cloudy pillar. 1. That God was willing to commune with man. 2. That sinful man could not see God and live. 3. That God should become incarnate, veiled in flesh as in the cloud. 4. That he should be their shelter, protector, guide. 5. That God manifest in the flesh should lead them to the Promised Land—Heaven.—*C. D.*

Verse 8.—Mercy and judgment, or the sea of glass mingled with fire.—*C. D.*

Verse 8.—Observe, I. That God's vengeance for sin does not prevent his forgiveness of sin; and, II. That God's forgiveness of sin does not prevent his taking vengeance.—*Stephen Bridge.*

Verse 9.—"*The Lord our God.*" A very sweet topic will be found in the consideration of the questions, "In what respect is Jehovah ours? and in what relations does he stand to his people?"

WORK ON THE NINETY-NINTH PSALM.

In "*The Golden Diary of Heart Converse with Jesus in the Book of Psalms. By the Rev. Dr.* EDERSHEIM, *Torquay.* Arranged for every Sunday in the year. Re-issue. 1873;" there are expositions of Psalms xcix., ci. and cii.

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PSALM C.

TITLE.—A Psalm of Praise; *or rather* of thanksgiving. *This is the only psalm bearing this precise inscription. It is all ablaze with grateful adoration, and has for this reason been a great favourite with the people of God ever since it was written. "Let us sing the Old Hundredth" is one of the every-day expressions of the Christian church, and will be so while men exist whose hearts are loyal to the Great King. Nothing can be more sublime this side heaven than the singing of this noble psalm by a vast congregation. Watts' paraphrase, beginning "Before Jehovah's awful throne," and the Scotch "All people that on earth do dwell," are both noble versions; and even Tate and Brady rise beyond themselves when they sing—*

> *"With one consent let all the earth*
> *To God their cheerful voices raise."*

In this divine lyric we sing with gladness the creating power and goodness of the Lord, even as before with trembling we adored his holiness.

EXPOSITION.

MAKE a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.
2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.
3 Know ye that the LORD he *is* God: *it is* he *that* hath made us and not we ourselves; *we are* his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, *and* into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name.
5 For the LORD *is* good; his mercy *is* everlasting; and his truth *endureth* to all generations.

1. "*Make a joyful noise unto the* LORD, *all ye lands.*" This is a repetition of the fourth verse of Psalm xcviii. The original word signifies a glad shout, such as loyal subjects give when their king appears among them. Our happy God should be worshipped by a happy people; a cheerful spirit is in keeping with his nature, his acts, and the gratitude which we should cherish for his mercies. In every land Jehovah's goodness is seen, therefore in every land should he be praised. Never will the world be in its proper condition till with one unanimous shout it adores the only God. O ye nations, how long will ye blindly reject him? Your golden age will never arrive till ye with all your hearts revere him.

2. "*Serve the* LORD *with gladness.*" "Glad homage pay with awful mirth." He is our Lord, and therefore he is to be served; he is our gracious Lord, and therefore to be served with joy. The invitation to worship here given is not a melancholy one, as though adoration were a funeral solemnity, but a cheery gladsome exhortation, as though we were bidden to a marriage feast. "*Come before his presence with singing.*" We ought in worship to realise the presence of God, and by an effort of the mind to approach him. This is an act which must to every rightly instructed heart be one of great solemnity, but at the same time it must not be performed in the servility of fear, and therefore we come before him, not with weepings and wailings, but with psalms and hymns. Singing, as it is a joyful, and at the same time a devout, exercise, should be a constant form of approach to God. The measured, harmonious, hearty utterance

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of praise by a congregation of really devout persons is not merely decorous out delightful, and is a fit anticipation of the worship of heaven, where praise has absorbed prayer, and become the sole mode of adoration. How a certain society of brethren can find it in their hearts to forbid singing in public worship is a riddle which we cannot solve. We feel inclined to say with Dr. Watts—

> "Let those refuse to sing
> Who never knew our God;
> But favourites of the heavenly king
> Must speak his praise abroad."

3. "*Know that the* LORD *he is God.*" Our worship must be intelligent. We ought to know whom we worship and why. "Man, know thyself," is a wise aphorism, yet to know our God is truer wisdom; and it is very questionable whether a man can know himself until he knows his God. Jehovah is God in the fullest, most absolute, and most exclusive sense, he is God alone; to know him in that character and prove our knowledge by obedience, trust, submission, zeal, and love is an attainment which only grace can bestow. Only those who practically recognise his Godhead are at all likely to offer acceptable praise. "*It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.*" Shall not the creature reverence its maker? Some men live as if they made themselves; they call themselves "self-made men," and they adore their supposed creators; but Christians recognise the origin of their being and their well-being, and take no honour to themselves either for being, or for being what they are. Neither in our first or second creation dare we put so much as a finger upon the glory, for it is the sole right and property of the Almighty. To disclaim honour for ourselves is as necessary a part of true reverence as to ascribe glory to the Lord. "Non nobis, domine!" will for ever remain the true believer's confession. Of late philosophy has laboured hard to prove that all things have been developed from atoms, or have, in other words, made themselves: if this theory shall ever find believers, there will certainly remain no reason for accusing the superstitious of credulity, for the amount of credence necessary to accept this dogma of scepticism is a thousandfold greater than that which is required even by an absurd belief in winking Madonnas, and smiling Bambinos. For our part, we find it far more easy to believe that the Lord made us than that we were developed by a long chain of natural selections from floating atoms which fashioned themselves. "*We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*" It is our honour to have been chosen from all the world besides to be *his* own people, and our privilege to be therefore guided by his wisdom, tended by his care, and fed by his bounty. Sheep gather around their shepherd and look up to him; in the same manner let us gather around the great Shepherd of mankind. The avowal of our relation to God is in itself praise; when we recount his goodness we are rendering to him the best adoration; our songs require none of the inventions of fictions, the bare facts are enough; the simple narration of the mercies of the Lord is more astonishing than the productions of imagination. That we are the sheep of his pasture is a plain truth, and at the same time the very essence of poetry.

4. "*Enter into his gates with thanksgiving.*" To the occurrence of the word *thanksgiving* in this place the psalm probably owes its title. In all our public service the rendering of thanks must abound; it is like the incense of the temple, which filled the whole house with smoke. Expiatory sacrifices are ended, but those of gratitude will never be out of date. So long as we are receivers of mercy we must be givers of thanks. Mercy permits us to enter his gates; let us praise that mercy. What better subject for our thoughts in God's own house than the Lord of the house. "*And into his courts with praise.*" Into whatever court of the Lord you may enter, let your admission be the subject of praise: thanks be to God, the innermost court is now open to believers, and we enter into that which is within the veil; it is incumbent upon us that we acknowledge the high privilege by our songs. "*Be thankful*

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unto him." Let the praise be in your heart as well as on your tongue, and let it all be for him to whom it all belongs. "*And bless his name.*" He blessed you, bless him in return; bless his name, his character, his person. Whatever he does, be sure that you bless him for it; bless him when he takes away as well as when he gives; bless him as long as you live, under all circumstances; bless him in all his attributes, from whatever point of view you consider him.

5. "*For the* LORD *is good.*" This sums up his character and contains a mass of reasons for praise. He is good, gracious, kind, bountiful, loving; yea, God is love. He who does not praise the good is not good himself. The kind of praise inculcated in the psalm, viz., that of joy and gladness, is most fitly urged upon us by an argument from the goodness of God. "*His mercy is everlasting.*" God is not mere justice, stern and cold; he has bowels of compassion, and wills not the sinner's death. Towards his own people mercy is still more conspicuously displayed; it has been theirs from all eternity, and shall be theirs world without end. Everlasting mercy is a glorious theme for sacred song. "*And his truth endureth to all generations.*" No fickle being is he, promising and forgetting. He has entered into covenant with his people, and he will never revoke it, nor alter the thing that has gone out of his lips. As our fathers found him faithful, so will our sons, and their seed for ever. A changeable God would be a terror to the righteous, they would have no sure anchorage, and amid a changing world they would be driven to and fro in perpetual fear of shipwreck. It were well if the truth of divine faithfulness were more fully remembered by some theologians; it would overturn their belief in the final fall of believers, and teach them a more consolatory system. Our heart leaps for joy as we bow before One who has never broken his word or changed his purpose.

> "As well might he his being quit
> As break his promise or forget."

Resting on his sure word, we feel that joy which is here commanded, and in the strength of it we come into his presence even now, and speak good of his name.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—This is the only psalm in the whole collection entitled "*A Psalm of Praise.*" It is supposed to have received this appellation because peculiarly adapted, if not designed to be sung, when the *sacrifices of thanksgiving* were offered. See Lev. vii. 12. The Greeks think it was written by David, who here invites all the world to join with the Israelites in the service of God, whose divine sovereignty he here recognises.—*Samuel Burder.*

Whole Psalm.—If we are right in regarding Psalms xciii.—xcix. as forming one continuous series, one great prophetic oratorio, whose title is "Jehovah is King," and through which there runs the same great idea, this psalm may be regarded as the doxology which closes the strain. We find lingering in it notes of the same great harmony. It breathes the same gladness; it is filled with the same hope, that all nations shall bow down before Jehovah, and confess that he is God.—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Whole Psalm.—This psalm contains a promise of Christianity, as winter at its close contains the promise of spring. The trees are ready to bud, the flowers are just hidden by the light soil, the clouds are heavy with rain, the sun shines in his strength; only a genial wind from the south is wanted to give a new life to all things.—"*The Speaker's Commentary,*" 1873.

Whole Psalm.—Luther would have immortalized his name had he done no more than written the majestic air and harmony to which we are accustomed to sing this psalm, and which, when the mind is in a truly worshipping frame,

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seems to bring heaven down to earth, and to raise earth to heaven, giving us anticipations of the pure and sublime delights of that noble and general assembly in which saints and angels shall for ever celebrate the praises of God. —*Ingram Cobbin.*

Verse 2.—The first half of this verse is from Psalm ii. 11, only that instead of "*with fear*," there, where the psalmist has to do with fierce rebels, there is substituted here "*gladness*" or joy.—*F. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 2.—"*Serve the* LORD *with gladness.*" It is a sign the oil of grace hath been poured into the heart "when the oil of gladness" shines on the countenance. Cheerfulness credits religion.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 2.—"*Serve the* LORD." It is our privilege to serve the Lord in all things. It is ours to please the Lord in loosing the latchet of a shoe; and to enjoy the expression of his favour therein. The servant of God is not serving at the same time another master; he has not been hired for occasional service; he abides in the service of his God, and cannot be about anything but his Master's business; he eats, he drinks, he sleeps, he walks, he discourses, he findeth recreation, all by the way of serving God. "*Serve the Lord with gladness.*" Can you bear to be waited upon by a servant who goes moping and dejected to his every task? You would rather have no servant at all, than one who evidently finds your service cheerless and irksome.—*George Bowen.*

Verse 3.—"*Know ye that the* LORD *he is God,*" &c. From the reasons of this exhortation, learn, that such is our natural atheism, that we have need again and again to be instructed, *that the Lord is God;* of whom, and through whom, and for whom are all things.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 3.—"*It is he that made us . . . we are his.*" Now, the ground of God's property in all things is his creating of all. . . . Accordingly, you may observe in many scriptures, where the Lord's propriety is asserted, this, as the ground of it, is annexed: Ps. lxxxix. 11, 12, the heavens, the earth, the whole world, and all therein is thine. Why so? "Thou hast founded them." And so are all the regions and quarters of the world, northern and southern, western and eastern; for Tabor was on the west and Hermon on the east; all are thine, for thou hast created them. So sea and land, Ps. xcv. 5. As all things measured by time, so time itself, the measure of all, Ps. lxxiv. 16, 17. "Thou hast made the light," *i.e.* the moon for the night and the sun for the day. He lays claim to all the climes of the earth, and all the seasons of the year on this account; he made them. This will be more evident and unquestionable, if we take notice of these particulars:—

1. He made all for himself. He was not employed by any to make it for another, for in that case sometimes the maker is not the owner; but the Lord did employ himself in that great work, and for himself did he undertake and finish it. Prov. xvi, 4, Col. i. 15, 16.

2. He made all things of nothing, either without any matter at all, or without any but what himself had before made of nothing. A potter when he makes an earthenware vessel, if the clay be not his own which he makes it of, he is not the full owner of the vessel, though he formed it: "the form is his, the matter is another's;" but since the Lord made all of nothing, or of such matter as himself had made, all is wholly his, matter and form, all entirely.

3. He made all without the help or concurrence of any other. There was none that assisted him, or did in the least co-operate with him in the work of creation. . . . Those that assist and concur with another in the making of a thing may claim a share in it; but here lies no such claim in this case, where the Lord alone did all, alone made all. All is his only.

4. He upholds all things in the same manner as he created, continues the being of all things in the same way as he gave it. He does it of himself, without other support, without any assistant. All would fall into nothing in

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a moment, if he did not every moment bear them up. So that all things on this account have still their being from him every moment, and their well-being too, and all the means which conduce to it; and therefore all are his own.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 3.—"*It is he that hath made us.*" The emperor Henry, while out hunting on the Lord's day called Quinquagesima, his companions being scattered, came unattended to the entrance of a certain wood; and seeing a church hard by, he made for it, and feigning himself to be a soldier, simply requested a mass of the priest. Now that priest was a man of notable piety, but so deformed in person that he seemed a monster rather than a man. When he had attentively considered him, the emperor began to wonder exceedingly why God, from whom all beauty proceeds, should permit so deformed a man to administer his sacraments. But presently, when mass commenced, and they came to the passage, "*Know ye that the Lord he is God,*" which was chanted by a boy, the priest rebuked the boy for singing negligently, and said with a loud voice, "*It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.*" Struck by these words, and believing the priest to be a prophet, the emperor raised him, much against his will, to the archbishopric of Cologne, which see he adorned by his devotion and excellent virtues.—*From* "*Roger of Wendover's* (—1237) *Flowers of History.*"

Verse 3.—"*It is he that hath made us . . . we are his.*" Many a one has drawn balsamic consolation from these words; as for instance Melancthon when disconsolately sorrowful over the body of his son in Dresden on the 12th July, 1559. But in "*He made us and we are his,*" there is also a rich mine of comfort and of admonition, for the Creator is also the Owner, his heart clings to his creature, and the creature owes itself entirely to him, without whom it would not have had a being, and would not continue in being.—*F. Delitzsch.*

Verse 3.—"*He that made us,*" *i.e.* made us what we are, a people to himself; as in Ps. xcv. 5, 1 Sam. xii. 6, and Deut. xxxii. 6. It was not we that made ourselves his (compare Ezek. xxix. 3). "*He* (and not we ourselves) *made us His people, and the flock whom he feeds.*"—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 3.—"*Not we*" is added, because any share, on the part of the church, in effecting the salvation bestowed upon her, would weaken the testimony which this bears to the exclusive Godhead of the Lord.—*F. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verses 3, 5.—"*Know ye*" what God is in himself, and what he is to you. Knowledge is the mother of devotion, and of all obedience; blind sacrifices will never please a seeing God. "Know" it, *i.e.* consider and apply it, and then you will be more close and constant, more inward and serious, in the worship of him. Let us know, then, these seven things concerning the Lord Jehovah, with whom we have to do in all the acts of religious worship.

1. "*That the Lord he is God,*" the only living and true God; that he is a being infinitely perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient, and the fountain of all being. 2. That he is our *Creator:* "*It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.*" We do not, we could not make ourselves; it is God's prerogative to be his own cause; our being is derived and depending. 3. That therefore *he is our rightful owner.* The Masorites, by altering one letter in the Hebrew, read it, "He made us, and his we are," or, "to him we belong." Put both the readings together, and we learn, that because God "made us, and not we ourselves," therefore we are not our own but his. 4. That *he is our sovereign Ruler.* "*We are his people,*" or subjects, and he is our prince, our rector or governor, that gives laws to us as moral agents, and will call us to an account for what we do. 5. That *he is our bountiful Benefactor;* we are not only his sheep whom he is entitled to, but "*the sheep of his pasture,*" whom he takes care of. 6. That he is a God of infinite mercy and good (verse 5); "*The Lord is good,*" and therefore doth good; "his mercy his everlasting." 7. That he is a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness; "*His truth endureth to all generations,*" and no word of his shall fall to the ground as antiquated or revoked.—*Matthew Henry.*

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Verse 4.—"*Enter into his gates;*" for to the most guilty are the gates of his church open.—*Francis Hill Tucker.*

Verse 4.—"*With thanksgiving.*" On the word תודה [the word used in Levit. vii. 12 for sacrifices of thanksgivings], Rabbi Menachen remarks: All sacrifices will be abolished; but the sacrifice of thanksgiving will remain.—*George Phillips.*

Verse 4.—The former part of this Psalm may have been chanted by the precentor when the peace-offering was brought to the altar; and this last verse may have been the response, sung by the whole company of singers, at the moment when fire was applied to the offering.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 5.—"*His mercy is everlasting.*" The everlasting unchangeable mercy of God, is the first motive of our turning to him, and of our continuing stedfast in his covenant, and it shall be the subject of unceasing praise in eternity. As the Lord is good, and his mercy everlasting, so the full perfection of these attributes in a perfect state will call forth praise unwearied from hearts that never faint.—*W. Wilson.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Whole Psalm.—This is a bunch of the grapes of Eshcol. It is a taste of what is still the promised land. The Jewish church came to its perfection in the reign of Solomon, but a greater than Solomon is here. The perfection of the New Testament church is here anticipated. This psalm teaches, I. *That there will be a joyful state of the whole world* (verse 1). 1. To whom the address is given—to "all lands," and all in those lands. 2. The subject of the address—"Make a joyful noise." What a doleful noise it *has* made! 3. By whom the address is given, by him who secures what he commands. II. *That this joyful state of the whole world will arise from the enjoyment of the Divine Being* (verse 2). 1. Men have long tried to be happy without God. 2. They will find at last that their happiness is in God. The conversion of an individual in this respect is a type of the conversion of the world. III. *That this enjoyment of God will arise from a new relation to him* (verse 3). 1. Of knowledge on our part: he will be known as the Triune God, as a covenant God, as the God of salvation—as God. 2. Of rightful claim on his part; (1.) by right of creation—"He hath made us;" (2.) By right of redemption—"Ye were not a people, but are now the people of God," &c.; "I have redeemed thee: thou art mine"; (3.) by right of preservation—"We are the sheep," &c. IV. *That this new relation to God will endear to us the ordinances of his house* (verse 4). 1. Of what the service will consist—"thanksgiving" and praise. 2. To whom it will be rendered. Enter into *his* gates—*his* courts—be thankful unto *him*—bless *his* name. V. *That this service will be perpetual;* begun on earth, continued in heaven. This fact is founded—1. Upon essential goodness. "For the Lord is good." 2. Upon everlasting mercy. "His mercy," etc. 3. Upon immutable truth. "His truth," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—"*Serve the* LORD *with gladness.*" 1. For he is the best of beings. 2. For his commandments are not grievous. 3. For he is your Saviour, as well as Creator; your friend, as well as Lord. 4. The angels, so much greater than yourself, know no reason why they should not serve him with gladness. 5. In serving him you serve yourself. 6. You make religion attractive. 7. You get fitness for heaven.—*George Bowen.*

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—A true heart, I. Is humble—*serves.* II. Is pious—"serve the Lord." III. Is active—*serves.* IV. Is consequently joyful—"with gladness."

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—"Serving the Lord with gladness." See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 769.

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Verse 3.—"*Know ye that the* LORD *he is God.*" That you may be true amid superstition, hopeful in contrition, persistent in supplication, unwearied in exertion, calm in affliction, firm in temptation, bold in persecution, and happy in dissolution.—*W. J.*

Verse 3.—"*We are his people.*" We have been twice born, as all his people are. We love the society of his people. We are looking unto Jesus like his people. We are separated from the world as his people. We experience the trials of his people. We prefer the employment of his people. We enjoy the privileges of his people.—*W. J.*

Verse 4.—A Discourse of Thankfulness which is due to God for his benefits and blessings.—*A Sermon by Thomas Goodwin. Works, vol. ix., pp.* 499—514. *Nichol's edition.*

Verse 4.—I. The privileges of access. II. The duty of thankfulness. III. The reasons for enjoying both.

Verse 5.—I. The inexhaustible fount—the goodness of God. II. The ever-flowing stream—the mercy of God. III. The fathomless ocean—the truth of God. "O the depths!"—*W. Durban.*

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PSALM CI.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David. *This is just such a psalm as the man after God's own heart would compose when he was about to become king in Israel. It is David all over, straightforward, resolute, devout; there is no trace of policy or vacillation,—the Lord has appointed him to be king, and he knows it, therefore he purposes in all things to behave as becomes a monarch whom the Lord himself has chosen. If we call this* THE PSALM OF PIOUS RESOLUTIONS, *we shall perhaps remember it all the more readily. After songs of praise a psalm of practice not only makes variety, but comes in most fittingly. We never praise the Lord better than when we do those things which are pleasing in his sight.*

EXPOSITION.

I WILL sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.

2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; *it* shall not cleave to me.

4 A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked *person*.

5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.

6 Mine eyes *shall be* upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.

7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.

8 I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.

1. "*I will sing of mercy and judgment.*" He would extol both the love and the severity, the sweets and the bitters, which the Lord had mingled in his experience; he would admire the justice and the goodness of the Lord. Such a song would fitly lead up to godly resolutions as to his own conduct, for that which we admire in our superiors we naturally endeavour to imitate. Mercy and judgment would temper the administration of David, because he had adoringly perceived them in the dispensations of his God. Everything in God's dealings with us may fittingly become the theme of song, and we have not viewed it aright until we feel we can sing about it. We ought as much to bless the Lord for the judgment with which he chastens our sin, as for the mercy with which he forgives it; there is as much love in the blows of his hand as in the kisses of his mouth. Upon a retrospect of their lives instructed saints scarcely know which to be most grateful for—the comforts which have cheered them, or the afflictions which have purged them. "*Unto thee, O* LORD, *will I sing.*" Jehovah shall have all our praise. The secondary agents of either the mercy or the judgment must hold a very subordinate place in our memory, and the Lord alone must be hymned by our heart. Our soul's sole worship must be the lauding of the Lord. The psalmist forsakes the minor

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key, which was soon to rule him in the one hundred and second psalm, and resolves that, come what may, he will sing, and sing to the Lord too, whatever others might do.

2. "*I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.*" To be holy is to be wise; a perfect way is a wise way. David's resolve was excellent, but his practice did not fully tally with it. Alas! he was not always wise or perfect, but it was well that it was in his heart. A king had need be both sage and pure, and, if he be not so in intent, when he comes to the throne, his after conduct will be a sad example to his people. He who does not even resolve to do well is likely to do very ill. Householders, employers, and especially ministers, should pray for both wisdom and holiness, for they will need them both. "*O when wilt thou come unto me?*"—an ejaculation, but not an interruption. He feels the need not merely of divine help, but also of the divine presence, that so he may be instructed, and sanctified, and made fit for the discharge of his high vocation. David longed for a more special and effectual visitation from the Lord before he began his reign. If God be with us we shall neither err in judgment nor transgress in character; his presence brings us both wisdom and holiness; away from God we are away from safety. Good men are so sensible of infirmity that they cry for help from God, so full of prayer that they cry at all seasons, so intense in their desires that they cry with sighs and groanings which cannot be uttered, saying, "O when wilt thou come unto me?" "*I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.*" Piety must begin at home. Our first duties are those within our own abode. We must have a perfect heart at home, or we cannot keep a perfect way abroad. Notice that these words are a part of a song, and that there is no music like the harmony of a gracious life, no psalm so sweet as the daily practice of holiness. Reader, how fares it with your family? Do you sing in the choir and sin in the chamber? Are you a saint abroad and a devil at home? For shame! What we are at home, that we are indeed. He cannot be a good king whose palace is the haunt of vice, nor he a true saint whose habitation is a scene of strife, nor he a faithful minister whose household dreads his appearance at the fireside.

3. "*I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.*" I will neither delight in it, aim at it or endure it. If I have wickedness brought before me by others I will turn away from it, I will not gaze upon it with pleasure. The psalmist is very sweeping in his resolve, he declines the least, the most reputable, the most customary form of evil—*no* wicked thing; not only shall it not dwell in his heart, but not even before his eyes, for what fascinates the eye is very apt to gain admission into the heart, even as Eve's apple first pleased her sight, and then prevailed over her mind and hand. "*I hate the work of them that turn aside.*" He was warmly against it; he did not view it with indifference, but with utter scorn and abhorrence. Hatred of sin is a good sentinel for the door of virtue. There are persons in courts who walk in a very crooked way, leaving the high road of integrity; and these, by short cuts, and twists, and turns, are often supposed to accomplish work for their masters which simple honest hearts are not competent to undertake; but David would not employ such, he would pay no secret service money, he loathed the practices of men who deviate from righteousness. He was of the same mind as the dying statesman who said, "Corruption wins not more than honesty." It is greatly to be deplored that in after years he did not keep himself clear in this matter in every case, though, in the main he did; but what would he have been if he had not commenced with this resolve, but had followed the usual crooked policy of Oriental princes? How much do we all need divine keeping! We are no more perfect than David, nay, we fall far short of him in many things; and, like him, we shall find need to write a psalm of penitence very soon after our psalm of good resolution. "*It shall not cleave to me.*" I will disown their ways, I will not imitate their policy: like dirt it may fall upon me, but I will wash it off, and never rest till I am rid of it. Sin, like pitch, is very apt to stick. In the course of our family history crooked things will turn up, for

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we are all imperfect, and some of those around us are far from being what they should be; it must, therefore, be one great object of our care to disentangle ourselves, to keep clear of transgression, and of all that comes of it: this cannot be done unless the Lord both comes to us, and abides with us evermore.

4. "*A froward heart shall depart from me.*" He refers both to himself and to those round about him; he would neither be crooked in heart himself, nor employ persons of evil character in his house; if he found such in his court he would chase them away. He who begins with his own heart begins at the fountain head, and is not likely to tolerate evil companions. We cannot turn out of our family all whose hearts are evil, but we can keep them out of our confidence, and let them see that we do not approve of their ways. "*I will not know a wicked person.*" He shall not be my intimate, my bosom friend. I must know him as a man or I could not discern his character; but if I know him to be wicked, I will not know him any further, and with his evil I will have no communion. "To know" in Scripture means more than mere perception, it includes fellowship, and in that sense it is here used. Princes must disown those who disown righteousness; if they know the wicked they will soon be known as wicked themselves.

5. "*Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off.*" He had known so bitterly the miseries caused by slanderers that he intended to deal severely with such vipers when he came into power, not to revenge his own ills, but to prevent others from suffering as he had done. To give one's neighbour a stab in the dark is one of the most atrocious of crimes, and cannot be too heartily reprobated, yet such as are guilty of it often find patronage in high places, and are considered to be men of penetration, trusty ones who have a keen eye, and take care to keep their lords well posted up. King David would lop the goodly tree of his state of all such superfluous boughs, "*Him that hath an high look and a proud heart him will not I suffer.*" Proud, domineering, supercilious gentlemen, who look down upon the poor as though they were so many worms crawling in the earth beneath their feet, the psalmist could not bear. The sight of them made him suffer, and therefore he would not suffer them. Great men often affect aristocratic airs and haughty manners, David therefore resolved that none should be great in his palace but those who had more grace and more sense than to indulge in such abominable vanity. Proud men are generally hard, and therefore very unfit for office; persons of high looks provoke enmity and discontent, and the fewer of such people about a court the better for the stability of a throne. If all slanderers were now cut off, and all the proud banished, it is to be feared that the next census would declare a very sensible diminution of the population.

6. "*Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me.*" He would seek them out, engage their services, take care of them, and promote them to honour: this is a noble occupation for a king, and one which will repay him infinitely better than listening to the soft nothings of flatterers. It would be greatly for the profit of us all if we chose our servants rather by their piety than by their cleverness; he who gets a faithful servant gets a treasure, and he ought to do anything sooner than part with him. Those who are not faithful to God will not be likely to be faithful to men; if we are faithful ourselves, we shall not care to have those about us who cannot speak the truth or fulfil their promises; we shall not be satisfied until all the members of our family are upright in character. "*He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.*" What I wish myself to be, that I desire my servant to be. Employers are to a great degree responsible for their servants, and it is customary to blame a master if he retains in his service persons of notorious character; therefore, lest we become partakers of other men's sins, we shall do well to decline the services of bad characters. A good master does well to choose a good servant; he may take a prodigal into his house for the sinner's good, but if he consults his own he will look in another quarter. Wicked nurses have great influence for evil over the minds of little children, and un-

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godly servants often injure the morals of the older members of the family, and therefore great care should be exercised that godly servants should be employed as far as possible. Even irreligious men have the sense to perceive the value of Christian servants, and surely their own Christian brethren ought not to have a lower appreciation of them.

7. "*He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house.*" He had power to choose his courtiers, and he meant to exercise it. Deceit among most orientals is reckoned to be a virtue, and is only censured when it is not sufficiently cunning, and therefore comes to be found out; it was therefore all the more remarkable that David should have so determinedly set his face against it. He could not tell what a deceitful man might be doing, what plots he might be contriving, what mischief he might be brewing, and therefore he resolved that he would at any rate keep him out of his house, that his palace might not become a den of villainy. Cheats in the market are bad enough, but deceivers at our own table we cannot bear. "*He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.*" He would not have a liar within sight or hearing; he loathed the mention of him. Grace makes men truthful, and creates in them an utter horror of everything approaching to falsehood. If David would not have a liar in his sight, much less will the Lord; neither he that loves nor he who makes a lie shall be admitted into heaven. Liars are obnoxious enough on earth; the saints shall not be worried with them in another world.

8. "*I will early destroy all the wicked of the land.*" At the very outset of his government he would promptly deal out justice to the worthless, he would leave them no rest, but make them leave their wickedness or feel the lash of the law. The righteous magistrate "beareth not the sword in vain." To favour sin is to discourage virtue; undue leniency to the bad is unkindness to the good. When our Lord comes in judgment, this verse will be fulfilled on a large scale; till then he sinks the judge in the Saviour, and bids men leave their sins and find pardon. Under the gospel we also are bidden to suffer long, and to be kind, even to the unthankful and the evil; but the office of the magistrate is of another kind, and he must have a sterner eye to justice than would be proper in private persons. Is he not to be a terror to evil doers? "*That I may cut off all the wicked doers from the city of the* LORD." Jerusalem was to be a holy city, and the psalmist meant to be doubly careful in purging it from ungodly men. Judgment must begin at the house of God. Jesus reserves his scourge of small cords for sinners inside the temple. How pure ought the church to be, and how diligently should all those who hold office therein labour to keep out and chase out men of unclean lives. Honourable offices involve serious responsibilities; to trifle with them will bring our own souls into guilt, and injure beyond calculation the souls of others. Lord, come to us, that we, in our several positions in life, may walk before thee with perfect hearts.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The contents of this psalm show that it was written at some remarkable period of David's life. Three different times have been fixed upon as respectively giving occasion for the solemn resolutions which are announced in it. The first is supposed to be when David, immediately after the death of Saul, succeeded to the government of a part of the kingdom; the second, when the whole kingdom was united under the dominion of David; and the third, when he removed the ark from the house of Obededom to Zion, and placed it in the vicinity of his own abode. It is certainly of little importance which of these periods we select, but the second verse of the psalm has some appearance of relating to the last mentioned. The psalmist here says, "*When wilt thou come to me?*" which seems to intimate that when he was to have the symbols of God's presence so near to him, he experienced a solemn sentiment

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respecting the holiness that was now more than ever incumbent upon him —a sentiment which induced him to form the sacred purposes and resolutions which he has specified. These purposes relate to the character of the persons whom he would select for his household, and those whom he would employ in carrying on his government, which appeared to be more firmly established by the divine condescension that was manifested to him, in having the earthly residence of God placed so near to himself. It was quite in agreement with David's character to form purposes of more fervent and steadfast obedience, in proportion to the advantages and favours which the divine goodness bestowed upon him.—*William Walford.*

Whole Psalm.—This psalm has been appropriately called "The Householder's Psalm;" and assuredly if every master of a family would regulate his household by these rules of the conscientious psalmist, there would be a far greater amount, not merely of domestic happiness and comfort, but of fulfilment of the serious and responsible duties which devolve on the respective members of a household. David in some measure may be supposed to speak of the regulation of a royal court and household; and of course with such we in our humbler sphere can have but little in common; yet though there may not be the same duties and the same requirements, yet the same principles should actuate all alike, and the same virtues that adorn the lowlier station may shed a radiance even on the highest.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Whole Psalm.—This is the psalm which the old expositors used to designate "The Mirror for Magistrates;" and an excellent mirror it is. It would mightily accelerate the coming of the time when every nation shall be Christ's possession, and every capital a "City of the Lord," if all magistrates could be persuaded to dress themselves by it every time they go forth to perform the functions of their godlike office. When Sir George Villiers became the favourite and prime minister of King James, Lord Bacon, in a beautiful Letter of Advice, counselled him to take this psalm for his rule in the promotion of courtiers. "In those the choice had need be of honest and faithful servants, as well as of comely outsides who can bow the knee and kiss the hand. King David (Psalm ci. 6, 7) propounded a rule to himself for the choice of his courtiers. He was a wise and a good king; and a wise and a good king shall do well to follow such a good example; and if he find any to be faulty, which perhaps cannot suddenly be discovered, let him take on him this resolution as King David did, '*There shall no deceitful person dwell in my house.*'" It would have been well both for the Philosopher and the Favourite if they had been careful to walk by this rule.—*William Binnie.*

Whole Psalm.—Eyring, in his "Life of Ernest the Pious" (Duke of Saxe-Gotha), relates that he sent an unfaithful minister a copy of the 101st Psalm, and that it became a proverb in the country when an official had done anything wrong: He will certainly soon receive the prince's psalm to read.—*F. Delitzsch.*

Whole Psalm.—The 101st psalm was one beloved by the noblest of Russian princes, Vladimir Monomachos; and by the gentlest of English reformers, Nicholas Ridley. But it was its first leap into life that has carried it so far into the future. It is full of a stern exclusiveness, of a noble intolerance, not against theological error, not against uncourtly manners, not against political insubordination, but against the proud heart, the high look, the secret slanderer, the deceitful worker, the teller of lies. These are the outlaws from king David's court; these are the rebels and heretics whom he would not suffer to dwell in his house or tarry in his sight.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, in "Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church,"* 1870.

Whole Psalm.—Such a hymn of praise as the grand doxology of Psalm xcix. could not die away without an echo. Accordingly Psalm c. may be regarded as forming the chorus of the church, and this as taking up and applying that part of the doxology which celebrated the *present* manifestation of the "King in his beauty."—*Alfred Edersheim.*

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Whole Psalm.—Mr. Fox reports that Bishop Ridley often read and expounded this psalm to his household, hiring them with money to get it by heart.—*Thomas Lye, in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 1.—"*I will sing.*" If thou bestowest mercies upon me; or if thou bringest any judgment upon me; before thee, O Lord, will I sing my hymn for all.—*Chaldee Paraphrase.*

Verse 1.—"*I will sing.*" The manner of expression imports a *cordial* resolution; heart and will are engaged in it; there is twice *I will* in the text. The manner of expression imports a *humble* resolution; I cannot sing of merit; but I will sing of mercy, and through mercy I will sing of mercy. To sing of mercy must be a humble song, for mercy towards a miserable sinner is a melting word; and to sing of judgment must be a humble song, for judgment in every sense is an awful word. The manner of the expression imports a *skilful* harper, a dexterous musician, even in a spiritual sense; he knew what should be the subject of the song, and he says, "I will sing of mercy and judgment;" and he knew what should be the object of the song, or to whom it should be sung, and therefore says, "To thee, O Lord, I will sing"; he knew who should be the singer, and therefore says, "I will" do it; he knew what should be the manner; and therefore says, "I will sing of mercy and judgment; to thee, O Lord, will I *sing.*" It is before the Lord he resolves to sing, as he did before the ark, which was a type of Christ; and so is it a song to the praise of God in Christ. The manner of the expression imports *a firm, fixed, and constant* resolution; so the redoubling of it seems to import; "I will sing, I will sing." He had a mind this exercise of singing should not go down, but be his continual trade, "I will sing, I will sing;" I will sing on earth and I will sing in heaven; I will sing in time and I will sing in eternity. And, indeed, all on whom the spirit of praise and gratitude is poured out resolve never to give over singing. . . . David had heard once, yea, twice, that mercy as well as power belongs to the Lord; and therefore not only once, but twice in a breath he resolves to sing unto the Lord. The word hath a great deal of elegancy and emphasis in it; I will sing of mercy, I will sing of judgment; O, I will sing, O Lord, I will sing; and I will sing unto thee.—*Ralph Erskine.*

Verse 1.—This song of the sweet singer of Israel is peculiar to earth; they do not sing of "*judgment*" in heaven, for there is no sin there; they do not sing of "*mercy*" in hell, for there is no propitiation for sin there. Time was when the song was not heard even on earth; for in Paradise man walked in innocence, and walking in innocence he walked in the light of his Father's face.—*Hugh Stowell*, 1856.

Verse 1.—"*I will sing of mercy and judgment.*" It comes all to this, as if the psalmist should say, "I will sing of *merciful judgments;*" for judgment is mercy, as it is the matter of the song: or, to take them separately, "I will sing of mercy *in* mercies, and, I will sing of mercy *in* judgment;" and so I will sing of my blinks and of my showers; I will sing both of my cloudy and my clear day; both of my ups and downs.—*Ralph Erskine.*

Verse 1.—"*Mercy and judgment.*" As the badge of the ship S. Paul sailed in was *Castor and Pollux*, twin brothers, so the badge of this Psalm is *Mercy and Judgment*, inseparable companions; of whom it may be said, as our prophet sometimes spake of Saul and Jonathan, "They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided." These are the two brightest stars in the firmament of majesty; the two fairest flowers, and choicest jewels in the imperial crown; like the carnation and the lily, the ruby and the sapphire, or the carbuncle and the diamond, yielding a mutual and interchangeable lustre each to other. They resemble not unfitly the two supporters of the king's arms, or the two seraphim stretching out their golden wings over the propitiatory, or the white and red rose in the same escutcheon.

We read that Solomon set up two goodly pillars in the porch of the temple, the one called *Jachin*, the other *Boaz*, which signify stability and strength;

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such pillars of the state are *mercy and judgment.* The throne of the King is borne up by them, as Solomon's was with lions of ivory on each side. Therefore, as in one place it is said that "*the throne is established by justice*" (Prov. xvi. 12); so in another that it is "*upheld by mercy*" (Prov. xx. 28); justice being as the bones and sinews in the body politic, and mercy as the veins and arteries. They are the two hands of action, the two eyes of virtue, and the two wings of honour. And as the eyes, if they be rightly set, do both look one way; so do *mercy and judgment*, however in the apprehension of the vulgar they seem to look contrary ways. And as the treble and the bass accord best in music; so do they in managing the commonwealth. Wherefore David promiseth to make them both sound tunable in his song without jar or discord: "*I will sing of mercy and judgment.*" . . . .

As *mercy* is here set in the first place; so shall the sentence of mercy and absolution be first pronounced at the last day. And it is a laudable custom of princes, at their first entrance to their kingdoms, to shew mercy, by hearing the mourning of the prisoner, and delivering the children of death, by loosing the bands of wickedness, by taking off the heavy burdens, by letting the oppressed go free, and by breaking every yoke of former extortions. Thus, our prophet himself, as soon as the crown was settled on his head, made inquiry if there remained yet alive any of the house of Saul, on whom he might shew mercy (2 Sam. ix.). O how fair a thing is this mercy in the time of anguish and trouble! It is like a cloud of rain that cometh in the time of drought. But this *mercy*, here spoken of in the first part of our prophet's song, stretcheth further; unfolding itself in *clemency*, in *courtesy*, and in *compassion*. In *clemency*, by pardoning malefactors; in *compassion*, by relieving the afflicted; in *courtesy*, towards all.—*George Hakewill*, or *Hakewell*, 1579—1649.

Verse 1.—"*Mercy and judgment.*" What is the history of every poor sinner, plucked as a brand from the fire, and brought to heaven in peace at last, but a history of "mercy and judgment"? Judgment first awakes to terror and to fear; mercy meets the poor, trembling, returning prodigal, and falls on his neck, and kisses, and forgives. Then, through all his chequered course, God hems up his way with judgment, that he may not wander, and yet brightens his path with mercy, that he may not faint. Is there a child of God that can look into the varied record of his heart or of his outward history, and not see goodness and severity, severity and goodness, tracking him all his journey through? Has he ever had a cup so bitter that he could say, "There is no mercy here"? Has he ever had a lot so bright that he could say, "There is no chastisement or correction here"? Has he ever had any bad tidings, and there have been no good tidings set over against them to relieve them? Has he ever had a sky so dark that he could see in it no star, or a cloud so unchequered that he could trace no rainbow of promise there? . . . .

What a beautifully woven web of judgment and mercy does every man's secret history, in his way through the wilderness of life to the land of promise, present! and how good, and how wholesome, and how kindly, and how gracious is this blessed intermingling of both! How do we need the judgment, to keep us humble and watchful and pure! and how do we need the mercy to keep us hopeful, and to nerve our efforts, and to stir our hearts, and to sustain us in patience, amid life's battle and struggle, and disappointment and vexation! Oh, how good it is for us, that we should thus, therefore, have the rod and staff together—the rod to chasten, and the staff to solace and sustain! How good it is for us, that we should have to "*sing of mercy and judgment!*" And yet, what is judgment itself, but mercy with a sterner aspect? And what are the chidings of judgment, but the sterner tones of the voice of a Father's love? For even judgment is one of the "all things" that "work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose."—*Hugh Stowell.*

Verse 1.—"*Mercy and judgment.*" God intermixeth mercy with affliction: he steeps his sword of justice in the oil of mercy; there was no night so dark,

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but Israel had a pillar of fire in it; there is no condition so dismal, but we may see a pillar of fire to give light. If the body be in pain, conscience is in peace,—there is mercy: affliction is for the prevention of sin,—there is mercy. In the ark there was a rod and a pot of manna, the emblem of a Christian's condition, mercy interlined with judgment.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 2.—"*I will behave myself wisely.*" The first thing he vows touching himself, is wise behaviour; prudence, not sapience; not wise contemplation, but wise action. It is not wise thoughts, or wise speaking, or wise writing, or wise gesture and countenance, will serve the turn, but wise behaviour: the former are graceful, but the other needful. For as the apostle saith of godliness, "Having a show of godliness, but denying the power thereof;" so certainly there are those who in point of wisdom and sufficiency that do little or nothing thoroughly, but *magno conatu nugas*, they make much ado about small matters; using all the perspectives of shifting they can devise to make an empty *superficies* seem a body that hath depth and bulk.—*George Hakewill.*

Verse 2.—"*I will walk.*" Walking is a word often used in Holy Scripture, and especially by our prophet in this book of the Psalms; yet more often figuratively than properly. It shall not be amiss, then, out of the property and nature of it, to consider the duties included and implied in it. The natural acts of it, then, are three; *motion*, *progress*, and *moderation*. As it includes *motion*, so is it opposed to lying, or standing, or sitting; as it includes *progress in motion*, so is it opposed to jumping or capering up and down in the same place; as it includes *moderation* in a *progressive motion*, so is it opposed to violent running.—*George Hakewill.*

Verse 2.—"*I will walk within my house.*" Much, though not all of the power of godliness, lies within doors. It is in vain to talk of holiness if we can bring no letters testimonial from our holy walking with our relations. Oh, it is sad when they that have reason to know us best, by their daily converse with us, do speak least for our godliness! Few so impudent as to come naked into the streets: if men have anything to cover their naughtiness they will put it on when they come abroad. But what art thou within doors? What care and conscience to discharge thy duty to thy near relations? He is a bad husband that hath money to spend among company abroad, but none to lay in provisions to keep his family at home. And can he be a good Christian that spends all his religion abroad, and leaves none for his nearest relations at home? that is, a great zealot among strangers, and little or nothing of God comes from him in his family? Yea, it were well if some that gain the reputation of Christians abroad, did not fall short of others that pretend not to profession in those moral duties which they should perform to their relations. There are some who are great strangers to profession, who yet are loving and kind in their way to their wives. What kind of professors then are they who are dogged and currish to the wife of their bosom? who by their tyrannical lording it over them embitter their spirit, and make them cover the Lord's altar with tears and weeping? There are wives to be found that are not clamorous, peevish, and froward to their husbands, who yet are far from a true work of grace in their hearts; do they then walk as becomes holiness who trouble the whole house with their violent passions? There are servants who from the authority of a natural conscience, are kept from railing and reviling language, when reproved by their masters, and shall not grace keep pace with nature? Holy David knew very well how near this part of a saint's duty lies to the very heart of godliness; and therefore, when he makes his solemn vow to walk holily before God, he instanceth this, as one stage wherein he might eminently discover the graciousness of his spirit; "*I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.*"—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 2.—"*Within my house.*" It is easier for most men to walk with a perfect heart in the *church*, or even in the *world*, than in their *own families*.

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How many are as meek as lambs among *others*, when at *home* they are *wasps* or *tigers*.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 2.—"*Within my house with a perfect heart.*" Even in our best directed establishments, as well as in private families, cultivation is still in a great measure confined to intellect alone; and the *direct* exercise and training of the moral and religious sentiments and affections are rarely thought of as essential to their full and vigorous development. Moral precepts are, no doubt, offered in abundance; but these address themselves chiefly to the intellect. We must not be satisfied with merely exclaiming, "Be kind, just, and affectionate," when perhaps at the very moment we are counteracting the effect of the advice by our own opposite conduct. "She told me not to lie," said Guy Rivers in speaking of his mother, "and she set me the example herself by frequently deceiving my father, and teaching me to disobey and deceive him." Conduct like this is more common in real life than is supposed, although generally less flagrant in degree. Parents and teachers indeed too often forget that the sentiments *feel* and *do not reason*, and that, consequently, even a stupid child may, by the instinctive operation of its moral nature at once detect and revolt at the immorality of practices, the true character of which its *reason* is unable to penetrate or expose. It is one of the most effectual methods of cultivating and exciting the moral sentiments in children, to set before them the manifestations of these in our habitual conduct. . . . .

What kind of moral duties does the parent encourage, who, recommending kindness, openness, and justice, *tricks* the child into the confession of a fault, and then basely punishes it, having previously promised forgiveness? And how is openness best encouraged—by practising it in conduct, or by neglecting it in practice, and prescribing it in words? Is it to be cultivated by thrusting suspicions in the face of honest intentions? And how is justice to be cultivated by a guardian who *speaks* about it, recommends it, and *in practice* charges each of four pupils the whole fare of a hackney-coach? Or what kind of moral education is that which says, "Do as I bid you, and I will give you sweetmeats or money, or I will tell your mama how good you were," holding out the lowest and most selfish propensities as the motives to moral conduct? Did space permit, I might indeed pursue the whole round of moral and religious duties, and ask similar questions at each. But it is needless. These examples will suffice; and I give them, not as applicable generally either to parents or teachers, but simply as individual instances from among both, which have come within the sphere of my own knowledge, and which bear directly upon the principle under discussion.—*Andrew Combe, in "The Principles of Physiology,"* 1836.

Verse 3.—"*Wicked thing.*" The original hath it, if we will render it word for word, "*I will set no word of Belial before mine eyes.*" But *word* is figuratively there put for *thing;* as likewise Ps. xli. 8; and so is it rendered both by *Montanus* in the margin, and in the text by *Junius;* howbeit, in his comment upon this psalm, he precisely follows the original, applying it against sycophants and flatterers, the mice and moths of court.—*George Hakewill.*

Verse 3.—"*I hate the work of them that turn aside.*" Mr. Schultens hath shown in his commentary on Prov. vii. 25 that שָׂטָה hath a much stronger and more significant meaning than that of mere *turning aside;* and that it is used of an unruly horse, that champs upon the bit through his fiery impatience; and when applied to a bad man, denotes one impatient of all restraint, of unbridled passions, and that is headstrong and ungovernable in the gratification of them, trampling on all the obligations of religion and virtue. Such as these are the deserved objects of the hatred of all good men, whose criminal deviations and presumptuous crimes they detest; none of which "*shall cleave to them;*" they will not harbour the love of, or inclination to them, nor habitually commit them, or encourage the practice of them. Persons of this character are too fre-

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quently about the courts of princes, but it is their honour and interest, as far as ever they can, to discountenance them.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 3.—"*It shall not cleave to me.*" A bird may light upon a man's house; but he may choose whether she shall nestle or breed there, or no: and the devil or his instruments may represent a wicked object to a man's sight; but he may choose whether he will entertain or embrace it or no. For a man to set wicked things before his eyes is nothing else but to sin of set purpose, to set himself to sin, or to sell himself to sin, as Ahab did, 1 Kings xxi.—*George Hakewill.*

Verse 3.—"*It shall not cleave to me.*" A wicked plan or purpose is thus represented as having a tendency to fasten itself on a man, or to "*stick to him*"—as pitch, or wax, or a *burr* does.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 4.—"*A froward heart.*" The original sense of עִקֵּשׁ is *torsit, contorsit,* to twist together, and denotes, when applied to men, persons of a perverse, subtle disposition, that can twist and twine themselves into all manner of shapes, and who have no truth and honour to be depended on.—*Samuel Chandler.*

Verse 4.—"*A froward heart.*" By which I understand "*from-wardness*"—giving way to sudden impulses of anger, or quick conception, and casting it forth in words or deeds of impetuous violence.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 5.—"*Privily slandereth*"—literally, he that *tongueth* his neighbour secretly. "*Will I not suffer,*" is properly, "him I *cannot,*" *i.e.*, cannot live with, cannot bear about me, as the same verb is used in Isai. i. 13.—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 5.—"*Him that hath an high look.*" Pride will sit and show itself in the eyes as soon as anywhere. A man is seen what he is *in oculis, in poculis, in loculis* (in his eyes, his cups, and his resorts) say the Rabbins. See Proverbs vi. 17.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 5.—"*Proud heart.*" From רָחַב *latus* or *dilatatus est,* is the noun רָחָב here, *broad,* or *wide,* or *large;* and being applied to the *heart* or *soul,* it notes *largeness of desires.*—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 5.—Detraction, ambition, and avarice are three weeds which spring and flourish in the rich soil of a court. The psalmist declareth his resolution to undertake the difficult task of eradicating them for the benefit of his people, that Israelites might not be harassed by informers, or repressed by insolent and rapacious ministers. Shall we imagine these vices less odious in the eyes of that King whose character was composed of humilty and charity; or will Christ admit those tempers into the court of heaven, which David determined to exclude from his court upon earth?—*George Horne.*

Verses 5—10. Perfect, as prophetic of Christ, is the delineation of his associates and disciples. The perverse; the evil-doers; the slanderers, and the proud found no fellowship with him. There were no common principles; no bond of union between them. There was "a gulph" interposed, as in the parable, which they could not pass; and what they saw of Christ, they beheld only from a distance. Nor even now, as then, can "the deceitful" dwell in Christ's "house"—his holy temple; nor the man of "lies be established" by his love and favour. They must renounce their vices before they can be admitted to his covenant; or, however they may claim communion with *Him,* he in return can have no sympathy with them.—*William Hill Tucker.*

Verse 6.—"*Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful.*" There is an eye of *search,* and an eye of *favour:* the one is for the seeking and finding them out, that they may serve; the other for countenancing of their persons, and rewarding of their service.—*George Hakewill.*

Verse 6.—"*Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land,*" etc. Christ's eyes are upon faithful persons, or faithful ministers of the word, who preach

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the Gospel faithfully, administer the ordinances truly, are faithful to the souls of men in watching over them, reproving and exhorting them; his eyes are upon them to keep and preserve them, and to honour and reward them with a crown of life that fadeth not away. His eyes are also on faithful members of churches, such who truly believe in him, who hold fast the faithful word, and keep close to his worship and ordinances; his eyes are upon them, to show favour to them, to bestow blessings upon them, and to protect and defend them, and to preserve them from perishing: "*That they may dwell with me;*" or, *sit with me;* at his table, or at the council-board, or in judgment, and assist him in the affairs of government; so such as are faithful shall dwell with Christ both here and hereafter; they dwell in him and with him by faith, and have communion with him; they dwell in his house below, and shall dwell with him above for evermore.—*John Gill.*

Verse 6.—"*He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.*" Art thou a godly master? When thou takest a servant into thy house, choose for God as well as thyself. Remember there is a work for God to be done by thy servant as well as by thyself: and shall he be fit for thy turn that is not for God's? Thou desirest the work should prosper thy servant takes in hand, dost thou not? And what ground hast thou, from the promise, to hope that the work should prosper in his hand that sins all the while he is doing of it? "The ploughing of the wicked is sin," Prov. xxi. 4. A godly servant is a greater blessing than we think on. He can work, and set God on work also, for his master's good: Gen. xxiv. 12, "O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master." And sure he did his master as much service by his prayer as by his prudence in that journey. If you were but to plant an orchard, you would get the best fruit trees, and not cumber your ground with crabs. There is more loss in a graceless servant in the house than a fruitless tree in the orchard. Holy David observed, while he was at Saul's court, the mischief of having wicked and ungodly servants, for with such was that unhappy king compassed, that David compares his court to the profane and barbarous heathens', among whom there was scarce more wickedness to be found: Ps. cxx. 6. "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar;" that is, among those who were as prodigiously wicked as any there. And no doubt but this made this gracious man in his banishment, before he came to the crown, having seen the evil of a disordered house, to resolve what he would do when God should make him the head of such a royal family. "*He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.*" He instanceth those sins, not as if he would spend all his zeal against these, but because he had observed them principally to abound in Saul's court, by which he had suffered so much, as you may perceive by Psalm cxx.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 8.—"*That I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the* LORD." As the kingdom of David was only a faint image of the kingdom of Christ, we ought to set Christ before our view; who, although he may bear with many hypocrites, yet as he will be the judge of the world, will at length call them all to an account, and separate the sheep from the goats. And if it seems to us that he tarries too long, we should think of that morning which will suddenly dawn, that all filthiness being purged away, true purity may shine forth.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 8.—"*Early.*" From some incidental notices of Scripture (2 Sam. xv. 2; Ps. ci. 8; Jer. xxi. 12), it has been inferred that judges ordinarily held their sessions in the morning. In a climate like that of Palestine, such a custom would be natural and convenient. It is doubtful, however, whether this passage expresses anything more than the promptness and zeal which a righteous judge exercises in the discharge of his duty.—*E. P. Barrows, in "Biblical Geography and Antiquities."*

Verse 8.—The holy vow "*to destroy all the wicked of the land,*" and to "*cut*

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off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord," must begin at our own hearts as his sanctuary, the temple of the Holy Ghost.—*Alfred Edersheim.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Whole Psalm.—This is a psalm of wills and shalls. There are nine wills and five shalls. Resolutions should be made, 1. With deliberation; not, therefore, upon trifling matters. 2. With reservation. "If the Lord will," etc. 3. With dependence upon divine strength for their fulfilment.—*G. R.*

Verse 1.—I. The sweet work that is resolved upon is to "*sing.*" II. The sweet singer that thus resolves, namely, David, "*I* will sing." III. The sweet subject of the song, "*mercy and judgment.*" IV. The sweet object of this praise, and the manner in which he would sing it—"*Unto thee, O Lord,* will I sing."—*Ralph Erskine.*

Verse 1.—What there is in mercy that affords ground of singing. I. The freeness and undeservedness of mercy. II. The unexpectedness of mercy. When I was expecting a frown I got a smile; when I was expecting nothing but wrath, I got a glance of love; instead of a stroke of vengeance, I got a view of glory. III. The seasonableness of mercy is a ground of singing—grace to help in time of need. IV. The greatness and riches of mercy make the recipients thereof sing. V. The sweetness of mercy makes them sing. VI. The sureness and firmness of mercy make them sing—"The sure mercies of David."—*From Ralph Erskine's Sermon, entitled "The Militant's Song."*

Verse 1.—I. The different conditions of the righteous man in this life. Not all mercy, nor all judgment, but mercy and judgment. II. His one duty and privilege in reference to them: "I will sing," etc. 1. Because they are both from God. 2. Because they are both from love. 3. Because they are both for present good. 4. Because they are both preparative for the heavenly rest.—*G. R.*

Verses 1, 2.—The blending of song with holy living. The bell of praise and the pomegranate of holy fruitfulness should both adorn the Lord's priests.

Verse 2.—I. The end desired: "To behave wisely," etc.; consistency of conduct. II. The means employed: "When wilt thou come," etc.; only when God is with us we walk in a perfect way. III. The test proposed: "Within my house," where I am most myself and am best known.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—The wisdom of holiness. 1. In selecting our sphere of duty. 2. In timing, arranging, and balancing duties. 3. In managing others according to their tempers. 4. In avoiding disputes with adversaries. 5. In administering rebuke, giving alms, rendering advice, etc.; the blending of the serpent with the dove.

Verse 2.—"*O when wilt thou come unto me?*" A devout ejaculation. I. Revealing the psalmist's need of the divine presence in order to holiness. II. His intense longing. III. His full expectation. IV. His through appreciation of the condescending visit.

Verse 2 (*last clause*)—Home piety. Its duty, excellence, influence, sphere, and reward. Note also the change of heart and firmness of purpose necessary to it.

Verse 3.—I. The sight of wickedness is to be avoided: "I will set no wicked thing," etc. II. When seen it is to be loathed: "I hate," etc. III. When felt it is to be repudiated. It may touch me, but "it shall not cleave to me."

Verse 4.—The need of extreme care in the choice of our intimates.

Verse 5.—The detestable nature of slander, hurting three persons at once—the speaker, hearer, and person slandered.

Verse 6.—The duty of believers who are wealthy to encourage and employ persons of pious character.

Verse 8.—The work of the great King when he comes in judgment.

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WORKS ON THE HUNDRED AND FIRST PSALM.

In CHANDLER'S "*Life of David*," Vol. II., pp. 16—20, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

"*King David's Vow for Reformation of Himselfe, his Family, his Kingdome.* Deliuered in twelue sermons before the Prince his Highnesse vpon Psalme 101. By GEORGE HAKEWILL, Dr. in Diuinity. London . . . 1622."

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PSALM CII.

SUBJECT.—*This is a patriot's lament over his country's distress. He arrays himself in the griefs of his nation as in a garment of sackcloth, and casts her dust and ashes upon his head as the ensigns and causes of his sorrow. He has his own private woes and personal enemies, he is moreover sore afflicted in body by sickness, but the miseries of his people cause him a far more bitter anguish, and this he pours out in an earnest, pathetic lamentation. Not, however, without hope does the patriot mourn; he has faith in God, and looks for the resurrection of the nation through the omnipotent favour of the Lord; this causes him to walk among the ruins of Jerusalem, and to say with hopeful spirit, "No, Zion, thou shalt never perish. Thy sun is not set for ever; brighter days are in store for thee." It is in vain to enquire into the precise point of Israel's history which thus stirred a patriot's soul, for many a time was the land oppressed, and at any of her sad seasons this song and prayer would have been a most natural and appropriate utterance.*

TITLE.—A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord. *This psalm is* a prayer *far more in spirit than in words. The formal petitions are few, but a strong stream of supplication runs from beginning to end, and like an under-current, finds its way heavenward through the moanings of grief and confessions of faith which make up the major part of the psalm. It is a prayer of* the afflicted, *or of "a sufferer," and it bears the marks of its parent age; as it is recorded of Jabez that "his mother bore him with sorrow," so may we say of this psalm; yet as Rachel's Benoni, or child of sorrow, was also her Benjamin, or son of her right hand, so is this psalm as eminently expressive of consolation as of desolation. It is scarcely correct to call it a penitential psalm, for the sorrow of it is rather of one suffering than sinning. It has its own bitterness, and it is not the same as that of the Fifty-first. The sufferer is afflicted more for others than for himself, more for Zion and the house of the Lord, than for his own house.* When he is overwhelmed, *or sorely troubled, and depressed. The best of men are not always able to stem the torrent of sorrow. Even when Jesus is on board, the vessel may fill with water and begin to sink.* And poureth out his complaint before the LORD. *When a cup is overwhelmed or turned bottom over, all that is in it is naturally poured out; great trouble removes the heart from all reserve, and causes the soul to flow out without restraint; it is well when that which is in the soul is such as may be poured out in the presence of God, and this is only the case where the heart has been renewed by divine grace. The word rendered "complaint" has in it none of the idea of fault-finding or repining, but should rather be rendered "moaning,"—the expression of pain, not of rebellion.*

To help the memory we will call this psalm THE PATRIOT'S PLAINT.

DIVISIONS.—*In the first part of the psalm, from* 1—11, *the moaning monopolizes every verse, the lamentation is unceasing, sorrow rules the hour. The second portion, from* 12—28, *has a vision of better things, a view of the gracious Lord, and his eternal existence and care for his people, and therefore it is interspersed with sunlight as well as shaded by the cloud, and it ends up right gloriously with calm confidence for the future, and sweet restfulness in the Lord. The whole composition may be compared to a day which, opening with wind and rain, clears up at noon and is warm with the sun, continues fine, with intervening showers, and finally closes with a brilliant sunset.*

EXPOSITION.

HEAR my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee.
2 Hide not thy face from me in the day *when* I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day *when* I call answer me speedily.

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3 For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth.

4 My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread.

5 By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin.

6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert.

7 I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top.

8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day: *and* they that are mad against me are sworn against me.

9 For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping,

10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.

11 My days *are* like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.

1. "*Hear my prayer, O* LORD." Or O JEHOVAH. Sincere suppliants are not content with praying for praying's sake, they desire really to reach the ear and heart of the great God. It is a great relief in time of distress to acquaint others with our trouble, we are eased by their hearing our lamentation, but it is the sweetest solace of all to have God himself as a sympathizing listener to our plaint. That he is such is no dream or fiction, but an assured fact. It would be the direst of all our woes if we could be indisputably convinced that with God there is neither hearing nor answering; he who could argue us into so dreary a belief would do us no better service than if he had read us our death-warrants. Better die than be denied the mercy-seat. As well be atheists at once as believe in an unhearing, unfeeling God. "*And let my cry come unto thee.*" When sorrow rises to such a height that words become too weak a medium of expression, and prayer is intensified into a cry, then the heart is even more urgent to have audience with the Lord. If our cries do not enter within the veil, and reach to the living God, we may as well cease from prayer at once, for it is idle to cry to the winds; but, blessed be God, the philosophy which suggests such a hideous idea is disproved by the facts of every day experience, since thousands of the saints can declare, "Verily, God hath heard us."

2. "*Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble.*" Do not seem as if thou didst not see me, or wouldst not own me. Smile now at any rate. Reserve thy frowns for other times when I can bear them better, if, indeed, I can ever bear them; but now in my heavy distress, favour me with looks of compassion. "*Incline thine ear unto me.*" Bow thy greatness to my weakness. If because of sin thy face is turned away, at least let me have a side view of thee, lend me thine ear if I may not see thine eye. Turn thyself to me again if my sin has turned thee away, give to thine ear an inclination to my prayers. "*In the day when I call answer me speedily.*" Because the case is urgent, and my soul little able to wait. We may ask to have answers to prayer as soon as possible, but we may not complain of the Lord if he should think it more wise to delay. We have permission to request and to use importunity, but no right to dictate or to be petulant. If it be important that the deliverance should arrive at once, we are quite right in making an early time a point of our entreaty, for God is as willing to grant us a favour now as to-morrow, and he is not slack concerning his promise. It is a proverb concerning favours from human hands, that "he gives twice who gives quickly," because a gift is en-

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hanced in value by arriving in a time of urgent necessity; and we may be sure that our heavenly Patron will grant us the best gifts in the best manner, granting us grace to help in time of need. When answers come upon the heels of our prayers they are all the more striking, more consoling, and more encouraging.

In these two verses the psalmist has gathered up a variety of expressions all to the same effect; in them all he entreats an audience and answer of the Lord, and the whole may be regarded as a sort of preface to the prayer which follows.

3. "*For my days are consumed like smoke.*" My grief has made life unsubstantial to me, I seem to be but a puff of vapour which has nothing in it, and is soon dissipated. The metaphor is very admirably chosen, for, to the unhappy, life seems not merely to be frail, but to be surrounded by so much that is darkening, defiling, blinding, and depressing, that, sitting down in despair, they compare themselves to men wandering in a dense fog, and themselves so dried up thereby that they are little better than pillars of smoke. When our days have neither light of joy nor fire of energy in them, but become as a smoking flax which dies out ignobly in darkness, then have we cause enough to appeal to the Lord that he would not utterly quench us. "*And my bones are burned as an hearth.*" He became as dry as the hearth on which a wood fire has burned out, or as spent ashes in which scarcely a trace of fire can be found. His soul was ready to be blown away as smoke, and his body seemed likely to remain as the bare hearth when the last comforting ember is quenched. How often has our piety appeared to us to be in this condition! We have had to question its reality, and fear that it never was anything more than a smoke; we have had the most convincing evidence of its weakness, for we could not derive even the smallest comfort from it, any more than a chilled traveller can derive from the cold hearth on which a fire had burned long ago. Soul-trouble experienced in our own heart will help us to interpret the language here employed; and church-troubles may help us also, if unhappily we have been called to endure them. The psalmist was moved to grief by a view of national calamities, and these so wrought upon his patriotic soul that he was wasted with anxiety, his spirits were dried up, and his very life was ready to expire. There is hope for any country which owns such a son; no nation can die while true hearts are ready to die for it.

4. "*My heart is smitten,*" like a plant parched by the fierce heat of a tropical sun, "*and withered like grass,*" which dries up when once the scythe has laid it low. The psalmist's heart was as a wilted, withered flower, a burned up mass of what once was verdure. His energy, beauty, freshness, and joy, were utterly gone, through the wasting influence of his anguish. "*So that I forget to eat my bread,*" or "because I forget to eat my bread." Grief often destroys the appetite, and the neglect of food tends further to injure the constitution and create a yet deeper sinking of spirit. As the smitten flower no longer drinks in the dew, or draws up nutriment from the soil, so a heart parched with intense grief often refuses consolation for itself and nourishment for the bodily frame, and descends at a doubly rapid rate into weakness, despondency, and dismay. The case here described is by no means rare, we have frequently met with individuals so disordered by sorrow that their memory has failed them even upon such pressing matters as their meals, and we must confess that we have passed through the same condition ourselves. One sharp pang has filled the soul, monopolized the mind, and driven everything else into the background, so that such common matters as eating and drinking have been utterly despised, and the appointed hours of refreshment have gone by unheeded, leaving no manifest faintness of body, but an increased weariness of heart.

5. "*By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin.*" He became emaciated with sorrow. He had groaned himself down to a living skeleton, and so in his bodily appearance was the more like the smoke-dried, withered, burnt-up things to which he had previously compared himself. It

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will be a very long time before the distresses of the church of God make some Christians shrivel into anatomies, but this good man was so moved with sympathy for Zion's ills that he was wasted down to skin and bone.

6. "*I am like a pelican of the wilderness,*" a mournful and even hideous object, the very image of desolation. "*I am like an owl of the desert;*" loving solitude, moping among ruins, hooting discordantly. The psalmist likens himself to two birds which were commonly used as emblems of gloom and wretchedness; on other occasions he had been as the eagle, but the griefs of his people had pulled him down, the brightness was gone from his eye, and the beauty from his person; he seemed to himself to be as a melancholy bird sitting among the fallen palaces and prostrate temples of his native land. Should not we also lament when the ways of Zion mourn and her strength languishes? Were there more of this holy sorrow we should soon see the Lord returning to build up his church. It is ill for men to be playing the peacock with worldly pride when the ills of the times should make them as mournful as the pelican; and it is a terrible thing to see men flocking like vultures to devour the prey of a decaying church, when they ought rather to be lamenting among her ruins like the owl.

7. "*I watch, and am like a sparrow alone upon the house top:*" I keep a solitary vigil as the lone sentry of my nation; my fellows are too selfish, too careless to care for the beloved land, and so like a bird which sits alone on the housetop, I keep up a sad watch over my country. The psalmist compared himself to a bird,—a bird when it has lost its mate or its young, or is for some other reason made to mope alone in a solitary place. Probably he did not refer to the cheerful sparrow of our own land, but if he did, the illustration would not be out of place, for the sparrow is happy in company, and if it were alone, the sole one of its species in the neighbourhood, there can be little doubt that it would become very miserable, and sit and pine away. He who has felt himself to be so weak and inconsiderable as to have no more power over his times than a sparrow over a city, has also, when bowed down with despondency concerning the evils of the age, sat himself down in utter wretchedness to lament the ills which he could not heal. Christians of an earnest, watchful kind often find themselves among those who have no sympathy with them; even in the church they look in vain for kindred spirits; then do they persevere in their prayers and labours, but feel themselves to be as lonely as the poor bird which looks from the ridge of the roof, and meets with no friendly greeting from any of its kind.

8. "*Mine enemies reproach me all the day.*" Their rage was unrelenting and unceasing, and vented itself in taunts and insults, the psalmist's patriotism and his griefs were both made the subjects of their sport. Pointing to the sad estate of his people they would ask him, "Where is your God?" and exult over him because their false gods were in the ascendant. Reproach cuts like a razor, and when it is continued from hour to hour, and repeated all the day and every day, it makes life itself undesirable. "*And they that are mad against me are sworn against me.*" They were so furious that they bound themselves by oath to destroy him, and used his name as their usual execration, a word to curse by, the synonym of abhorrence and contempt. What with inward sorrows and outward persecutions he was in as ill a plight as may well be conceived.

9. "*For I have eaten ashes like bread.*" He had so frequently cast ashes upon his head in token of mourning, that they had mixed with his ordinary food, and grated between his teeth when he ate his daily bread. One while he forgot to eat, and then the fit changed, and he ate with such a hunger that even ashes were devoured. Grief has strange moods and tenses. "*And mingled my drink with weeping.*" His drink became as nauseous as his meat, for copious showers of tears had made it brackish. This is a telling description of all-saturating, all-embittering sadness,—and this was the portion of one of the best of men, and that for no fault of his own, but because of his love to the Lord's people.

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If we, too, are called to mourn, let us not be amazed by the fiery trial as though some strange thing had happened unto us. Both in meat and drink we have sinned; it is not therefore wonderful if in both we are made to mourn.

10. "*Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up and cast me down.*" A sense of the divine wrath which had been manifested in the overthrow of the chosen nation and their sad captivity led the psalmist into the greatest distress. He felt like a sere leaf caught up by a hurricane and carried right away, or the spray of the sea which is dashed upwards that it may be scattered and dissolved. Our translation gives the idea of a vessel uplifted in order that it may be dashed to the earth with all the greater violence and the more completely broken in pieces; or to change the figure, it reminds us of a wrestler whom his opponent catches up that he may give him a more desperate fall. The first interpretation which we have given is, however, more fully in accordance with the original, and sets forth the utter helplessness which the writer felt, and the sense of overpowering terror which bore him along in a rush of tumultuous grief which he could not withstand.

11. "*My days are like a shadow that declineth.*" His days were but a shadow at best, but now they seem to be like a shadow which was passing away. A shadow is unsubstantial enough, how feeble a thing must a declining shadow be? No expression could more forcibly set forth his extreme feebleness. "*And I am withered like grass.*" He was like grass, blasted by a parching wind, or cut down with a scythe, and then left to be dried up by the burning heat of the sun. There are times when through depression of spirit a man feels as if all life were gone from him, and existence had become merely a breathing death. Heart-break has a marvellously withering influence over our entire system; our flesh at its best is but as grass, and when it is wounded with sharp sorrows, its beauty fades, and it becomes a shrivelled, dried, uncomely thing.

12 But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations.

13 Thou shalt arise, *and* have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.

14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.

15 So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.

16 When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.

17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.

18 This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.

19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth;

20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death;

21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem;

22 When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord.

23 He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days.

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24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years *are* throughout all generations.
25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens *are* the work of thy hands.
26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:
27 But thou *art* the same, and thy years shall have no end.
28 The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.

12. Now the writer's mind is turned away from his personal and relative troubles to the true source of all consolation, namely, the Lord himself, and his gracious purposes towards his own people. "*But thou, O* LORD, *shalt endure for ever.*" I perish, but thou wilt not, my nation has become almost extinct, but thou art altogether unchanged. The original has the word "sit,"—"thou, Jehovah, to eternity shalt sit:" that is to say, thou reignest on, thy throne is still secure even when thy chosen city lies in ruins, and thy peculiar people are carried into captivity. The sovereignty of God in all things is an unfailing ground for consolation; he rules and reigns whatever happens, and therefore all is well.

Firm as his throne his promise stands,
And he can well secure,
What I've committed to his hands,
Till the decisive hour.

"*And thy remembrance unto all generations.*" Men will forget me, but as for thee, O God, the constant tokens of thy presence will keep the race of man in mind of thee from age to age. What God is now he always will be, that which our forefathers told us of the Lord we find to be true at this present time, and what our experience enables us to record will be confirmed by our children and their children's children. All things else are vanishing like smoke, and withering like grass, but over all the one eternal, immutable light shines on, and will shine on when all these shadows have declined into nothingness.

13. "*Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion.*" He firmly believed and boldly prophesied that apparent inaction on God's part would turn to effective working. Others might remain sluggish in the matter, but the Lord would most surely bestir himself. Zion had been chosen of old, highly favoured, gloriously inhabited, and wondrously preserved, and therefore by the memory of her past mercies it was certain that mercy would again be showed to her. God will not always leave his church in a low condition; he may for a while hide himself from her in chastisement, to make her see her nakedness and poverty apart from himself, but in love he must return to her, and stand up in her defence, to work her welfare. "*For the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.*" Divine decree has appointed a season for blessing the church, and when that period has arrived, blessed she shall be. There was an appointed time for the Jews in Babylon, and when the weeks were fulfilled, no bolts nor bars could longer imprison the ransomed of the Lord. When the time came for the walls to rise stone by stone, no Tobiah or Sanballat could stay the work, for the Lord himself had arisen, and who can restrain the hand of the Almighty? When God's own time is come, neither Rome, nor the devil, nor persecutors, nor atheists, can prevent the kingdom of Christ from extending its bounds. It is God's work to do it,—he must "*arise*"; he will do it, but he has his own appointed season; and meanwhile we must, with holy anxiety and believing expectation, wait upon him.

14. "*For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.*" They delight in her so greatly that even her rubbish is dear to them. It was a

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good omen for Jerusalem when the captives began to feel a home-sickness, and began to sigh after her. We may expect the modern Jews to be restored to their own land when the love of their country begins to sway them, and casts out the love of gain. To the church of God no token can be more full of hope than to see the members thereof deeply interested in all that concerns her; no prosperity is likely to rest upon a church when carelessness about ordinances, enterprises, and services is manifest; but when even the least and lowest matter connected with the Lord's work is carefully attended to, we may be sure that the set time to favour Zion is come. The poorest church member, the most grievous backslider, the most ignorant convert, should be precious in our sight, because forming a part, although possibly a very feeble part, of the new Jerusalem. . If we do not care about the prosperity of the church to which we belong-need we wonder if the blessing of the Lord is withheld?

15. "*So the heathen shall fear the name of the* LORD." Mercy within the church is soon perceived by those without. When a candle is lit in the house, it shines through the window. When Zion rejoices in her God, the heathen begin to reverence his name, for they hear of the wonders of his power, and are impressed thereby. "*And all the kings of the earth thy glory.*" The restoration of Jerusalem was a marvel among the princes who heard of it, and its ultimate resurrection in days yet to come will be one of the prodigies of history. A church quickened by divine power is so striking an object in current history that it cannot escape notice, rulers cannot ignore it, it affects the Legislature, and forces from the great ones of the earth a recognition of the divine working. Oh that we might see in our days such a revival of religion that our senators and princes might be compelled to pay homage to the Lord, and own his glorious grace. This cannot be till the saints are better edified, and more fully builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Internal prosperity is the true source of the church's external influence.

16. "*When the* LORD *shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.*" As kings display their skill and power and wealth in the erection of their capitals, so would the Lord reveal the splendour of his attributes in the restoration of Zion, and so will he now glorify himself in the edification of his church. Never is the Lord more honourable in the eyes of his saints than when he prospers the church. To add converts to her, to train these for holy service, to instruct, illuminate, and sanctify the brotherhood, to bind all together in the bonds of Christian love, and to fill the whole body with the energy of the Holy Spirit—this is to build up Zion. Other builders do but puff her up, and their wood, hay, and stubble come to an end almost as rapidly as it was heaped together; but what the Lord builds is surely and well done, and redounds to his glory. Truly, when we see the church in a low state, and mark the folly, helplessness, and indifference of those who profess to be her builders; and, on the other hand, the energy, craft, and influence of those opposed to her, we are fully prepared to own that it will be a glorious work of omnipotent grace should she ever rise to her pristine grandeur and purity.

17. "*He will regard the prayer of the destitute.*" Only the poorest of the people were left to sigh and cry among the ruins of the beloved city; as for the rest, they were strangers in a strange land, and far away from the holy place, yet the prayers of the captives and the forlorn offscourings of the land would be heard of the Lord, who does not hear men because of the amount of money they possess, or the breadth of the acres which they call their own, but in mercy listens most readily to the cry of the greatest need. "*And not despise their prayer.*" When great kings are building their palaces it is not reasonable to expect them to turn aside and listen to every beggar who pleads with them, yet when the Lord builds up Zion, and appears in his robes of glory, he makes a point of listening to every petition of the poor and needy. He will not treat their pleas with contempt; he will incline his ear to hear, his heart to consider, and his hand to help. What comfort is here for those who account themselves to be utterly destitute; their abject want is here met with a most

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condescending promise. It is worth while to be destitute to be thus assured of the divine regard.

18. "*This shall be written for the generation to come.*" A note shall be made of it, for there will be destitute ones in future generations,—"the poor shall never cease out of the land,"—and it will make glad their eyes to read the story of the Lord's mercy to the needy in former times. Registers of divine kindness ought to be made and preserved; we write down in history the calamities of nations,—wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes are recorded; how much rather then should we set up memorials of the Lord's lovingkindness! Those who have in their own souls endured spiritual destitution, and have been delivered out of it, cannot forget it; they are bound to tell others of it, and especially to instruct their children in the goodness of the Lord. "*And the people which shall be created shall praise the* LORD." The psalmist here intends to say that the rebuilding of Jerusalem would be a fact in history for which the Lord would be praised from age to age. Revivals of religion not only cause great joy to those who are immediately concerned in them, but they give encouragement and delight to the people of God long after, and are indeed perpetual incentives to adoration throughout the church of God. This verse teaches us that we ought to have an eye to posterity, and especially should we endeavour to perpetuate the memory of God's love to his church and to his poor people, so that young people as they grow up may know that the Lord God of their fathers is good and full of compassion. Sad as the psalmist was when he wrote the dreary portions of this complaint, he was not so absorbed in his own sorrow, or so distracted by the national calamity, as to forget the claims of coming generations; this, indeed, is a clear proof that he was not without hope for his people, for he who is making arrangements for the good of a future generation has not yet despaired of his nation. The praise of God should be the great object of all that we do, and to secure him a revenue of glory both from the present and the future is the noblest aim of intelligent beings.

19, 20. "*For he hath looked down from the heights of his sanctuary,*" or "leaned from the high place of his holiness," "*from heaven did the* LORD *behold the earth,*" looking out like a watcher from his tower. What was the object of this leaning from the battlements of heaven? Why this intent gaze upon the race of men? The answer is full of astounding mercy; the Lord does not look upon mankind to note their grandees, and observe the doings of their nobles, but "*to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death.*" Now the groans of those in prison so far from being musical are very horrible to hear, yet God bends to hear them: those who are bound for death are usually ill company, yet Jehovah deigns to stoop from his greatness to relieve their extreme distress and break their chains. This he does by providential rescues, by restoring health to the dying, and by finding food for the famishing; and spiritually this deed of grace is accomplished by sovereign grace, which delivers us by pardon from the sentence of sin, and by the sweetness of the promise from the deadly despair which a sense of sin had created within us. Well may those of us praise the Lord who were once the children of death, but are now brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The Jews in captivity were in Haman's time appointed to death, but their God found a way of escape for them, and they joyfully kept the feast of Purim in memorial thereof; let all souls that have been set free from the crafty malice of the old dragon with even greater gratitude magnify the Lord of infinite compassion.

21. "*To declare the name of the* LORD *in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem.*" Great mercy displayed to those greatly in need of it, is the plainest method of revealing the attributes of the Most High. Actions speak more loudly than words; deeds of grace are a revelation even more impressive than the most tender promises. Jerusalem restored, the church re-edified, desponding souls encouraged, and all other manifestations of Jehovah's power to bless, are so

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many manifestoes and proclamations put up upon the walls of Zion to publish the character and glory of the great God. Every day's experience should be to us a new gazette of love, a court circular from heaven, a daily despatch from the headquarters of grace. We are bound to inform our fellow Christians of all this, making them helpers in our praise, as they hear of the goodness which we have experienced. While God's mercies speak so eloquently, we ought not to be dumb. To communicate to others what God has done for us personally and for the church at large is so evidently our duty, that we ought not to need urging to fulfil it. God has ever an eye to the glory of his grace in all that he does, and we ought not wilfully to defraud him of the revenue of his praise.

22. "*When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the* LORD." The great work of restoring ruined Zion is to be spoken of in those golden ages when the heathen nations shall be converted unto God; even those glorious times will not be able to despise that grand event, which, like the passage of Israel through the Red Sea, will never be eclipsed and never cease to awaken the enthusiasm of the chosen people. Happy will the day be when all nations shall unite in the sole worship of Jehovah, then shall the histories of the olden times be read with adoring wonder, and the hand of the Lord shall be seen as having ever rested upon the sacramental host of his elect: then shall shouts of exulting praise ascend to heaven in honour of him who loosed the captives, delivered the condemned, raised up the desolations of ages, and made out of stones and rubbish a temple for his worship.

23. "*He weakened my strength in the way.*" Here the psalmist comes down again to the mournful string, and pours forth his personal complaint. His sorrow had cast down his spirit, and even caused weakness in his bodily frame, so that he was like a pilgrim who limped along the road, and was ready to lie down and die. "*He shortened my days.*" Though he had bright hopes for Jerusalem, he feared that he should have departed this life long before those visions had become realities; he felt that he was pining away and would be a shortlived man. Perhaps this may be our lot, and it will materially help us to be content with it, if we are persuaded that the grandest of all interests is safe, and the good old cause secure in the hands of the Lord.

24. "*I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days.*" He betook himself to prayer. What better remedy is there for heart-sickness and depression? We may lawfully ask for recovery from sickness and may hope to be heard. Good men should not dread death, but they are not forbidden to love life: for many reasons the man who has the best hope of heaven, may nevertheless think it desirable to continue here a little longer, for the sake of his family, his work, the church of God, and even the glory of God itself. Some read the passage, "Take me not up," let me not ascend like disappearing smoke, do not whirl me away like Elijah in a chariot of fire, for as yet I have only seen half my days, and that a sorrowful half; give me to live till the blustering morning shall have softened into a bright afternoon of happier existence. "*Thy years are throughout all generations.*" Thou livest, Lord; let me live also. A fulness of existence is with thee, let me partake therein. Note the contrast between himself pining and ready to expire, and his God living on in the fulness of strength for ever and ever; this contrast is full of consolatory power to the man whose heart is stayed upon the Lord. Blessed be his name, he faileth not, and, therefore, our hope shall not fail us, neither will we despair for ourselves or for his church.

25. "*Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth.*" Creation is no new work with God, and therefore to "create Jerusalem a praise in the earth" will not be difficult to him. Long ere the holy city was laid in ruins the Lord made a world out of nothing, and it will be no labour to him to raise the walls from their heaps and replace the stones in their courses. We can neither continue our own existence nor give being to others; but the Lord not only is, but he is the Maker of all things that are; hence, when our affairs are at the very

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lowest ebb we are not at all despairing, because the Almighty and Eternal Lord can yet restore us. "*And the heavens are the work of thine hands.*" Thou canst therefore not merely lay the foundations of Zion, but complete its roof, even as thou hast arched in the world with its ceiling of blue; the loftiest stories of thine earthly palace shall be piled on high without difficulty when thou dost undertake the building thereof, since thou art architect of the stars, and the spheres in which they move. When a great labour is to be performed it is eminently reassuring to contemplate the power of him who has undertaken to accomplish it; and when our own strength is exhausted it is supremely cheering to see the unfailing energy which is still engaged on our behalf.

26. "*They shall perish, but thou shalt endure.*" The power which made them shall dissolve them, even as the city of thy love was destroyed at thy command; yet neither the ruined city nor the ruined earth can make a change in thee, reverse thy purpose, or diminish thy glory. Thou standest when all things fall. "*Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.*" Time impairs all things, the fashion becomes obsolete and passes away. The visible creation, which is like the garment of the invisible God, is waxing old and wearing out, and our great King is not so poor that he must always wear the same robes; he will ere long fold up the worlds and put them aside as worn out vestures, and he will array himself in new attire, making a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. How readily will all this be done. "Thou shalt change them and they shall be changed;" as in the creation so in the restoration, omnipotence shall work its way without hindrance.

27. "*But thou art the same,*" or, "thou art he." As a man remains the same when he has changed his clothing, so is the Lord evermore the unchanging One, though his works in creation may be changed, and the operations of his providence may vary. When heaven and earth shall flee away from the dread presence of the great Judge, he will be unaltered by the terrible confusion, and the world in conflagration will effect no change in him; even so, the psalmist remembered that when Israel was vanquished, her capital destroyed, and her temple levelled with the ground, her God remained the same self-existent, all-sufficient being, and would restore his people, even as he will restore the heavens and the earth, bestowing at the same time a new glory never known before. The doctrine of the immutability of God should be more considered than it is, for the neglect of it tinges the theology of many religious teachers, and makes them utter many things of which they would have seen the absurdity long ago if they had remembered the divine declaration, "I am God, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." "*And thy years shall have no end.*" God lives on, no decay can happen to him, or destruction overtake him. What a joy is this! We may lose our dearest earthly friends, but not our heavenly Friend. Men's days are often suddenly cut short, and at the longest they are but few, but the years of the right hand of the Most High cannot be counted, for they have neither first nor last, beginning nor end. O my soul, rejoice thou in the Lord always, since he is always the same.

28. "*The children of thy servants shall continue.*" The psalmist had early in the psalm looked forward to a future generation, and here he speaks with confidence that such a race would arise and be preserved and blessed of God. Some read it as a prayer, "let the sons of thy servants abide." Any way, it is full of good cheer to us; we may plead for the Lord's favour to our seed, and we may expect that the cause of God and truth will revive in future generations. Let us hope that those who are to succeed us will not be so stubborn, unbelieving and erring as we have been. If the church has been minished and brought low by the lukewarmness of the present race, let us entreat the Lord to raise up a better order of men, whose zeal and obedience shall win and hold a long prosperity. May our own dear ones be among the better generation who shall continue in the Lord's ways, obedient to the end. "*And their*

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seed shall be established before thee." God does not neglect the children of his servants. It is the rule that Abraham's Isaac should be the Lord's, that Isaac's Jacob should be beloved of the Most High, and that Jacob's Joseph should find favour in the sight of God. Grace is not hereditary, yet God loves to be served by the same family time out of mind, even as many great landowners feel a pleasure in having the same families as tenants upon their estates from generation to generation. Here is Zion's hope, her sons will build her up, her offspring will restore her former glories. We may, therefore, not only for our own sakes, but also out of love to the church of God, daily pray that our sons and daughters may be saved, and kept by divine grace even unto the end,—established before the Lord.

We have thus passed through the cloud, and in the next psalm we shall bask in the sunshine. Such is the chequered experience of the believer. Paul in the seventh of Romans cries and groans, and then in the eighth rejoices and leaps for joy; and so, from the moaning of the hundred and second psalm, we now advance to the songs and dancing of the hundred and third, blessing the Lord that, "though weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—"*A prayer,*" etc. The prayer following is longer than others. When Satan, the Law-Adversary, doth extend his pleas against us, it is meet that we should enlarge our counter pleas for our own souls; as the powers of darkness do lengthen and multiply their wrestlings, so must we our counter wrestlings of prayer. Eph. vi. 12, 18.—*Thomas Cobbet*, 1657.

Title.—"*When he . . . poureth out,*" etc. Here we have the manner of the church's prayer suitable to her extremity illustrated by a simile taken from a vessel overcharged with new wine or strong liquor, that bursts for vent. Oh the heart-bursting cries she sends out all the day! Here is no lazy, slothful, lip labour, stinted forms of prayer, no empty sounds of verbal expressions, which can never procure her a comfortable answer from her God, or the least ease to her burthened soul; but poured-out prayers as *Hannah*, 1 Sam. i. 15, and *Jeremy*, Lam. ii. 12, pressed forth with vehemence of spirit and heart pangs of inward grief: thus the Lord deals with his church and people; ere he pour out cups of consolation they must pour out tears in great measure.—*Finiens Canus Vove.*

Title.—

> This is the mourner's prayer when he is faint,
> And to the Eternal Father breathes his plaint.
> —*John Keble.*

Whole Psalm.—The psalm has been attributed to *Daniel*, to *Jeremiah*, to *Nehemiah*, or to some of the other *prophets* who flourished during the time of the captivity. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has applied the *twenty-fifth*, *twenty-sixth* and *twenty-seventh* verses to our Lord, and the perpetuity of his kingdom.—*Adam Clarke.*

Whole Psalm.—I doubt whether, without apostolic teaching, any of us would have had the boldness to understand it; for in many respects it is the most remarkable of all the psalms—the psalm of "THE AFFLICTED ONE"—while his soul is overwhelmed within him in great affliction, and sorrow, and anxious fear.—*Adolph Saphir, in "Expository Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews."*

Verse 1.—"*Hear my prayer, O* LORD, *and let my cry come unto thee.*" When, at any time we see the beggars, or poor folks, that are pained and grieved with hunger and cold, lying in the streets of cities and towns, full of sores, we are somewhat moved inwardly with pity and mercy; but if we our own selves

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attend and give ear to their wailings, cryings, and lamentable noises that they make, we should be much more stirred to show our pity and mercy on them; for no man else can show the grief of the sick and sore persons, so well and in so pathetic a manner as he himself. Therefore, since the miserable crying and wailing of those that suffer bodily pain and misery can prevail so much upon the hearts of mortal creatures; I doubt not, Good Lord, but thou, who art all merciful, must needs be inclined to exercise thy mercy, if *my* sorrowful cry and petition may *come unto* thine ears, or into thy presence.—*John Fisher* (1459—1535) *in* "*A Treatise concerning the fruitful Sayings of David,*" 1714.

Verse 1.—"*My prayer.*" His own, and not another's; not what was composed for him, but composed by him; which came out of his own heart, and out of unfeigned lips, and expressed under a feeling sense of his own wants and troubles; and though dictated and inwrought in his heart by the Spirit of God, yet, being put up by him in faith and fervency, it is called his own, and which he desires might be heard.—*John Gill.*

Verse 1.—"*My cry.*" Lest my praying should not prevail, behold, O God, I raise it to a cry; and crying, I may say, is the greatest bell in all the ring of praying: for louder than crying I cannot pray. O, then, if not my prayer, at least "*let my cry come unto thee.*" If I be not heard when I cry, I shall cry for not being heard; and if heard when I cry, I shall cry to be heard yet more; and so whether heard or not heard, I shall cry still, and God grant I may cry still; so thou be pleased, O God, to "hear my prayer," and to "let my cry come unto thee."—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verses 1, 2.—This language is the language of godly sorrow, of faith, of tribulation, and of anxious hope: of *faith*, for the devout suppliant lifts up his heart and voice to heaven, "as seeing him who is invisible," (Heb. xi. 27) and entreats him to hear his prayer and listen to his crying: *of tribulation*, for he describes himself as enduring affliction, and unwilling to lose the countenance of the Lord *in the time of his trouble: of anxious hope*, for he seems to expect, in the midst of his groaning, that his prayers, like those of Cornelius, will "go up for a memorial before God" who will hear him, "and that right soon."—*Charles Oxenden, in* "*Sermons on the Seven Penitential Psalms,*" 1838.

Verses 1, 2.—The Lord suffereth his babbling children to speak to him in their own form of speech. (albeit the terms which they use be not fitted for his spiritual, invisible, and incomprehensible majesty); such as are, "*Hear me,*" "*hide not thy face,*" "*incline thine ear to me,*" and such like other speeches.—*David Dickson.*

Verses 1, 2.—Note, David sent his prayer as a sacred ambassador to God. Now there are four things requisite to make an embassy prosperous. The ambassador must be regarded with favourable eye: he must be heard with a ready ear: he must speedily return when his demands are conceded. These four things David as a suppliant asks from God his King.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 2.—"*Incline thine ear unto me.*" The great exhaustion of the afflicted one is hinted at: so worn out is he, that he is hardly able to cry any more, but with a faint voice only feebly mutters, like a weak sick man, whose voice if we would catch, we must *incline the ear.*—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 3.—"*Consumed like smoke,*" would be better read, "pass away as *in smoke,*" as if they disappeared into smoke and ashes. "*Burned as an hearth,*" is not a felicitous translation, for a "hearth" should be incombustible. Better "burned as a faggot," as any fuel. The sentiment, My days waste away to nothing, turn to no good account, are lost.—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 3.—"*My days are consumed like smoke;* or, as Hebrew, literally, "*in* (*into*) *smoke.*" The very same expression which David in Ps. xxxvii. 20 had used of "the enemies of the Lord:" "They shall consume into smoke" (compare Ps. lxviii. 2). Hereby the ideal sufferer virtually complains that the lot of the wicked befalls him, though being righteous (Ps. ci.).—*A. R. Fausset.*

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Verse 3.—"*My days are consumed like smoke.*" As the smoke is a vapour proceeding from the fire, yet hath no heat in it: so my days are come from the torrid zone of youth into the region of cold and age; and as the smoke seems a thick substance for the present, but presently vanisheth into air; so my days made as great shew at first as if they would never have been spent; but now, alas, are wasted and leave me scarce a being. As the smoke is fuliginous and dark, and affords no pleasure to look upon it; so my days are all black and in mourning; no joy nor pleasure to be taken in them. And as the smoke ascends indeed, but by ascending wastes itself and comes to nothing: so my days are wasted in growing, are diminished in increasing; their plenty hath made a scarcity, and the more they have been the fewer they are. And how, indeed, can my days choose but be consumed as smoke, when "*my bones are burned as an hearth*"? for as when the hearth is burned there can be made no more fire upon it; so, when my bones, which are as the hearth upon which my fire of life is made, come once to be burned; how can any more fire of life be made upon them? and when no fire can be made, what will remain but only smoke?—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 3.—"*As an hearth.*" Or, as a *trivet*, or, *gridiron;* so the Targum: or, as a *frying-pan:* so the Arabic version.—*John Gill.*

Verse 4.—"*My heart is smitten and withered like grass.*" The metaphor here is taken from grass, cut down in the meadow. It is first "*smitten*" with the *scythe*, and then "*withered*" by the *sun*. Thus the Jews were smitten with the judgments of God; and they are now withered under the fire of the *Chaldeans.—Adam Clarke.*

Verse 4.—"*I forget to eat my bread.*" I have heard of some that have forgotten their own names, but I never heard of any that forget to eat his meat; for there is a certain prompter called hunger that will make a man to remember his meat in spite of his teeth. And yet it is true, when the heart is blasted and withered like grass, such a forgetfulness of necessity will follow. Is it that the withering of the heart is the prime cause of sorrow; at least cause of the prime sorrow; and immoderate sorrow is the mother of stupidity, stupifying and benumbing the animal faculties, that neither the understanding nor the memory can execute their functions? Or is it, that sorrow is so intentive to that it sorrows for, that it cannot intent to think anything else? Or is it, that nature makes account, that to feed in sorrow were to feed sorrow, and therefore thinks best to forbear all eating? Or is it, that as sorrow draws moisture from the brain and fills the eyes with water; so it draws a like juice from other parts, which fills the stomach instead of meat? However it be, it shews a wonderful operation that is in sorrow; to make not only the stomach to refuse its meat, but to make the brain forget the stomach, between whom there is so natural a sympathy and so near a correspondence. But as the vigour of the heart breeds plenty of spirits, which convey to all the parts, gives every one a natural appetite; so when the heart is blasted and withered like grass, and that there is no more any vigour in it, the spirits are presently at a stand, and then no marvel if the stomach lose its appetite, and forget to eat bread.—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 4.—"*I forget to eat my bread.*" When grief hath thus dejected the spirits, the man has no appetite for that food which is to recruit and elevate them. Ahab, smitten with one kind of grief, David with another, and Daniel with a third, all forgot, or refused, to eat their bread. 1 Kings xxi. 4; 2 Sam. xii. 16; Dan. x. 3. Such natural companions are mourning and fasting.—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 5.—"*My bones cleave to my skin.*" When the bones cleave to the skin, both are near cleaving to the dust.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—That grief readily causes the body to pine away is very well known. It is related of Cardinal Wolsey, by an eye-witness, that when he heard that his

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master's favour was turned from him, he was wrung with such an agony of grief, which continued a whole night, that in the morning his face was dwindled away into half its usual dimensions.

Verse 6.—"*I am like a pelican of the wilderness.*" The Kaath was a bird of solitude that was to be found in the "*wilderness,*" *i.e.*, far from the habitations of man. This is one of the characteristics of the *pelican*, which loves not the neighbourhood of human beings, and is fond of resorting to broad, uncultivated lands, where it will not be disturbed. In them it makes its nest and hatches its young, and to them it retires after feeding, in order to digest in quiet the ample meal which it has made. Mr. Tristram well suggests that the metaphor of the psalmist may allude to the habit common to the pelican and its kin, of sitting motionless for hours after it has gorged itself with food, its head sunk on its shoulders, and its bill resting on its breast.—*J. G. Wood.*

Verse 6.—"*A pelican of the wilderness.*" Here only [at Hulet] have I seen the pelican of the wilderness, as David calls it. I once had one of them shot just below this place, and, as it was merely wounded in the wing, I had a good opportunity to study its character. It was certainly the most sombre, austere bird I ever saw. It gave one the blues merely to look at it. David could find no more expressive type of solitude and melancholy by which to illustrate his own sad state. It seemed as large as a half-grown donkey, and when fairly settled on its stout legs, it looked like one. The pelican is never seen but in these unfrequented solitudes.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 6.—Consider that thou needest not complain, like Elijah, that thou art left *alone*, seeing the best of God's *saints* in all ages have smarted in the same kind—instance in *David:* indeed sometimes he boasts how he 'lay in green pastures, and was led by still waters;' but after he bemoans that he 'sinks in deep mire, where there was no standing.' What is become of those green pastures? parched up with the drought. Where are those still waters? troubled with the tempest of affliction. The same David compares himself to an "*owl,*" and in the next Psalm resembles himself to an "*eagle.*" Do two fowls fly of more different kind? The one the *scorn*, the other the *sovereign;* the one the *slowest*, the other the *swiftest;* the one the most *sharp-sighted*, the other the most *dim-eyed* of all birds. Wonder not, then, to find in thyself sudden and strange alterations. It fared thus with all God's servants in their agonies of temptation; and be confident thereof, though now run aground with grief, in due time thou shalt be all afloat with comfort.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 6.—"*Owl.*" Some kind of owl, it is thought, is intended by the Hebrew word *côs*, translated "*little owl*" in Lev. xi. 17; Deut. xiv. 16, where it is mentioned amongst the unclean birds. It occurs also in Ps. cii. 6. "*I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of ruined places*" (A. V., "desert"). The Hebrew word *côs* means a "cup" in some passages of Scripture, from a root meaning to "receive," to "hide," or "bring together"; hence the pelican, "the cup," or "pouch-bird," has been suggested as the bird intended. In this case the verse in the psalm would be rendered thus:—"I am become like a pelican in the wilderness, even as the pouch-bird in the desert places." But the fact that both the pelican and the *côs* are enumerated in the list of birds to be avoided as food is against this theory, unless the word changed its meaning in the psalmist's time, which is improbable. The expression *côs* "of ruined places" looks very much as if some owl were denoted. The Arabic definitely applies a kindred expression as one of the names of an owl, viz., *um elcharab*, *i.e.* "mother of ruins." The Septuagint gives νυκτικόραξ as the meaning of *côs;* and we know from Aristotle that the Greek word was a synonym of ὦτος, evidently, from his description of the bird, one of the eared owls. Dr. Tristram is disposed to refer the *côs* to the little *Athene Persica*, the most common of all the owls in Psalestine, the representative of the *A. noctua* of Southern Europe. The Arabs call this bird "*boomah,*" from his note; he is described "as a grotesque and comical-looking little bird, familiar

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and yet cautious; never moving unnecessarily, but remaining glued to his perch, unless he has good reason for believing that he has been detected, and twisting and turning his head instead of his eyes to watch what is going on." He is to be found amongst rocks in the wadys or trees by the water-side, in olive yards, in the tombs and on the ruins, on the sandy mounds of Beersheba, and on "the spray-beaten fragments of Tyre, where his low wailing note is sure to be heard at sunset, and himself seen bowing and keeping time to his own music." *W. Houghton, in "Cassell's Biblical Educator,"* 1874.

Verse 6.—"*Owl of the desert.*"

> Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower,
> The moping owl does to the moon complain
> Of such as, wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
> Molest her ancient solitary reign.
>
> —*Thomas Gray* (1716—1771).

Verse 7.—"*I watch.*" During the hours allotted to sleep "*I wake,*" like a little bird which sits solitary on the house-top, while all beneath enjoy the sleep which he giveth to his beloved.—*Alfred Edersheim.*

Verse 7.—"*A sparrow alone upon the house-top.*" When one of them has lost its mate—a matter of every-day occurrence—he will sit on the house-top alone, and lament by the hour his sad bereavement.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 7.—"*I am as a sparrow alone,*" etc. It is evident that the "sparrow alone and melancholy upon the house-tops" cannot be the lively, gregarious sparrow which assembles in such numbers on these favourite feeding-places [the house-tops of the East]. We must therefore look for some other bird, and naturalists are now agreed that we may accept the *Blue Thrush* (*Petrocossyphus cyaneus*) as the particular tzippor, or small bird, which sits alone on the house-tops. The colour of this bird is a dark blue, whence it derives its popular name. Its habits exactly correspond with the idea of solitude and melancholy. The Blue Thrushes never assemble in flocks, and it is very rare to see more than a pair together. It is fond of sitting on the tops of houses, uttering its note, which, however agreeable to itself, is monotonous and melancholy to a human ear.—*J. G. Wood, in "Bible Animals."*

Verse 7.—"*A sparrow.*" Most readers are struck with the incongruity of the image, as it appears in our version, intended by the Psalmist to express a condition of distress and desolation. The sparrow is found, indeed, all over the East, in connection with houses, as it is with ourselves; but it is everywhere one of the most social of birds, cheerful to impertinence; and mischievously disposed, instead of being retiring in its habits, and melancholy in its demeanour. The word, in the original, is a general term for all the small birds, insectivorous and frugivirous, denominated clean, and that might be eaten according to the law, the thrushes, larks, wagtails, finches, as well as sparrows. It seems to be, indeed, a mere imitation of their common note, like the one which we have in the word "chirrup." Most critics are, therefore, content with the rendering, "solitary bird," or "solitary little bird." But this is very unsatisfactory. It does not identify the species: and there is every probability that there must have been a particular bird which the psalmist, writing at the close of the Babylonish captivity, had in his eye, corresponding to his representation of it, and illustrative of his isolated condition.

Such there is at the present day, of common occurrence in Southern Europe and Western Asia. Its history is very little known to the world, and its existence has hitherto escaped the notice of all biblical commentators. Remarkably enough, the bird is commonly, but erroneously, called a sparrow, for it is a real thrush in size, in shape, in habits, and in song. It differs singularly from the rest of the tribe, throughout all the East, by a marked preference for sitting solitary upon the habitation of man. It never associates with any other, and only at one season with its own mate; and even then it is often seen quite alone upon the house-top, where it warbles its sweet and plaintive

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strains, and continues its song, moving from roof to roof. America has its solitary thrush, of another species, and of somewhat different habits. The dark solitary cane and myrtle swamps of the southern states are there the favourite haunts of the recluse bird; and the more dense and gloomy these are the more certainly is it to be found flitting in them.—"*The Biblical Treasury.*"

Verse 7.—"*Alone.*" But little do men perceive what solitude is, and how far it extendeth; for a crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal where there is no love. The Latin adage meeteth it a little: "*magna civitas, magno solitudo;*" because in a great town friends are scattered, so that there is not that fellowship, for the most part, which is in less neighbourhoods; but we may go further, and affirm most truly, that it is a mere and miserable solitude to want true friends, without which the world is but a wilderness; and even in this sense also of solitude, whosoever in the frame of his nature and affections is unfit for friendship, he taketh it of the beast, and not from humanity.—*Francis Bacon.*

Verse 7.—"*Alone.*" See the reason why people in trouble love solitariness. They are full of sorrow; and sorrow, if it have taken deep root, is naturally reserved, and flies all conversation. Grief is a thing that is very silent and private. Those people that are very talkative and clamorous in their sorrows, are never very sorrowful. Some are apt to wonder, *why melancholy people delight to be so much alone*, and I will tell you the reason of it. 1. Because the disordered humours of their bodies alter their temper, their humours, and their inclinations, that *they are no more the same that they used to be;* their very distemper is averse to what is joyous and diverting; and they that wonder at them may as wisely wonder why they will be diseased, which they would not be if the knew how to help it; but the *Disease of Melancholy* is so obstinate, and so unknown to all but those who have it, that nothing but the power of God can totally overthrow it, and I know no other cure for it. 2. *Another reason why they choose to be alone* is, because *people do not generally mind what they say*, nor believe them, but rather deride them, which they do not use so cruelly to do with those that are in other distempers; and no man is to be blamed for avoiding society, when it does not afford the common credit to his words that is due to the rest of men. But, 3, Another, and the principal reason why people in trouble and sadness choose to be alone is, because *they generally apprehend themselves singled out to be the marks of God's peculiar displeasure*, and they are often by their sharp afflictions a terror to themselves, and a wonder to others. It even breaks their hearts to see how low they are fallen, how oppressed, that were once as easy, as pleasant, as full of hope as others are, Job. vi. 21: "Ye see my casting down, and are afraid." Ps. lxxi. 7. "I am as a wonder unto many." And it is usually unpleasant to others to be with them. Ps. lxxxviii. 18: "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." And though it was not so with the friends of Job, to see a man whom they had once known happy, to be so miserable; one whom they had seen so very prosperous, to be so very poor, in such sorry, forlorn circumstances, did greatly affect them; he, poor man, was changed, they knew him not, Job ii. 12, 13, "And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great." As the prophet represents one under spiritual and great afflictions, "That *he sitteth alone*, and keepeth silence," Lam. iii. 28.—*Timothy Rogers* (1660—1729), *in* "*A Discourse on Trouble of Mind, and the Disease of Melancholy.*"

Verse 8.—"*Mine enemies reproach me.*" It is true what Plutarch writes, that men are more touched with reproaches than with other injuries; affliction, too, gives a keener edge to calumny, for the afflicted are more fitting objects of pity than of mockery.—*Mollerus.*

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Verse 8.—"*Mine enemies reproach me,*" etc. If I be where they are they rail at me to my face; and if I be not amonst them they revile me behind my back; and they do it not by starts and fits, that might give me some breathing time; but they are spitting their poison *all the day long;* and not single and one by one, that might leave hope of resisting; but they make combinations, and enter leagues against me; and to make their leagues the stronger, and less subject to dissolving, they bind themselves by oath, and take the sacrament upon it. And now sum up all these miseries and afflictions; begin with my fasting; then take my groaning; then add my watching; then the shame of being wondered at in company; then the discomfort of sitting disconsolate alone; and, lastly, add to these the spite and malice of my enemies; and what marvel, then, if these miseries joined all together make me altogether miserable; what marvel if I be nothing but skin and bone, when no flesh that were wise would ever stay upon a body to endure such misery. —*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 8 (*last clause*). Swearing by one, means, to make his name a by-word of execration, or an example of cursing. (Isa. lxv. 15; Jer. xxix. 22; xlii. 18).—*Carl Bernard Moll, in Lange's Commentary.*

Verse 9.—"*I have eaten ashes like bread.*" Though the bread indeed be strange, yet not so strange as this,—that having complained before of forgetting to eat his bread, he should now on a sudden fall to *eating of ashes like bread.* For had he not been better to have forgotten it still, unless it had been more worth remembering? For there is not in nature so unfit a thing to eat as *ashes;* it is worse than Nebuchadnezzar's grass.—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 9.—"*I have mingled my drink with weeping.*" If you think his bread to be bad, you will find his drink to be worse; for *he mingles his drink with tears:* and what are tears, but brinish and salt humours? and is brine a fit liquor to quench one's thirst? May we not say here, the remedy is worse than the disease? for were it not better to endure any thirst, than to seek to quench it with such drink? Is it not a pitiful thing to have no drink to put in the stomach, but that which is drawn out of the eyes? and yet whose case is any better? No man certainly commits sin, but with a design of pleasure; but sin will not be so committed; for whosoever commit sin, let them be sure at some time or other to find a thousand times more trouble about it than ever they found pleasure in it. For all sin is a kind of surfeit, and there is no way to keep it from being mortal but by this strict diet of eating ashes like bread and mingling his drink with tears. O my soul, if these be works of repentance in David, where shall we find a penitent in the world besides himself? To talk of repentance is obvious in everyone's mouth; but where is any that eats ashes like bread, and mingles his drink with tears?—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 10.—"*For thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.*" Thou hast lifted me up of a great height, in that thou madest me like unto thine image, touching my reasonable soul, and hast given me power, by thy grace, to inherit the everlasting joys of heaven, both body and soul, if I did live here after thy commandments. What greater gift canst thou give me, Lord, than to have the fruition of thee that art all in all things? How canst thou lift me higher than to eternal beatitude? But then, alas, thou hast letten me fall down again, for thou hast joined my noble soul with an earthly, heavy, and a frail body; the weight and burden thereof draweth down my mind and heart from the consideration of thy goodness, and from well doing, unto all kinds of vices, and to the regarding of temporal things according to his nature. The earthly mansion keepeth down the understanding. Thus setting me up, as it were, above the wind, thou hast given me a very great fall (Job xxx. 22). I am in creation above all other kind of earthly creatures, and almost equal with angels; but being in this estate thou hast knit a knot thereto, that for breaking the least of thy commandments I shall suffer damnation. So that without thy

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continual mercy and help I am in worse case herein than any brute beast, whose life or soul dieth with the body.—*Sir Anthony Cope* (1551).

Verse 10.—"*For thou hast lifted me up and cast me down.*" That is that I might fall with greater poise. *Significatur gravissima collisio.* Here the prophet accuseth not God of cruelty, but bewaileth his own misery. *Miserum est fuisse felicem*, it is no small unhappiness to have been happy.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 11 (*first clause*).—My days (my term of life) are as the lengthened shade, the lengthening shade of evening, that shows the near approach of night. The comparison, though not strictly expressed, is beautifully suggestive of the thought intended.—*Thomas J. Conant.*

Verse 11 (*last clause*).—The "*and I*," in the Hebrew, stands in designed contrast to "But *thou*," ver. 12.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 13.—"*Thou shalt arise, and have mercy*," etc. *Tu miserebere*, "*Thou shalt*," as the Shunamite to the prophet, catching hold on his feet, though Gehazi thrust her away, *Vivit Dominus*, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not let thee go;" and, as Jacob to the angel, when he had wrestled the whole night with him, *Non dimittam*, I will not let thee loose till I have a blessing from thee.—*From "A Sermon at Paules Crosse on behalfe of Paules Church, March* 26, 1620. *By the B. of London*" [*John King*].

Verse 13.—"*The set time.*" There is a certain set time for God's great actions. He lets the powers of darkness have their hour, and God will take his hour. He hath a set time for the discovery of his mercy, and he will not stay a jot beyond it. What is this time? verse 9, etc. When they "eat ashes like bread, and mingle their drink with weeping;" when they are most humble, and when the servants of God have moral affection to the church; when their humble and ardent affections are strong, even to the ruin and rubbish of it; when they have a mighty desire and longing for the reparation of it, as the Jews in captivity had for the very dust of the temple: verse 14: "For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof." "*For*" there notes it to be a reason why the set time was judged by them to be come. That is God's set time when the church is most believing, most humble, most affectionate to God's interest in it, and most sincere. Without faith we are not fit to desire mercy, without humility we are not fit to receive it, without affection we are not fit to value it, without sincerity we are not fit to improve it, Times of extremity contribute to the growth and exercise of these qualifications. —*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 14.—"*For thy servants take pleasure in her stones.*" That is, they are still attached to her, and regard her with extreme affection, although in ruins. Jerusalem itself affords at this day a touching illustration of this passage. There is reason to believe that a considerable portion of the *lower part* of the walls which enclose the present mosque of Omar, which occupies the site of the ancient Jewish temple, are the same, or at least the southern, western, and eastern sides are the same as those of Solomon's temple. At one part where the remains of this old wall are the most considerable and of the most massive character—where two courses of masonry, composed of massive blocks of stone, rising to the height of thirty feet—is what is called the Wailing Place of the Jews. "Here," says Dr. Olin, "at the foot of the wall, is an open place paved with flags, where the Jews assemble every Friday, and in small numbers on other days, for the purpose of praying and bewailing the desolations of their holy places. Neither the Jews nor Christians are allowed to enter the Haram, which is consecrated to Mohammedan worship, and this part of the wall is the nearest approach they can make to what they regard as the precise spot within the forbidden enclosure upon which the ancient temple stood. They keep the pavement swept with great care, and take off their shoes, as on holy ground. Standing or kneeling with their faces towards the ancient wall, they gaze in

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silence upon its venerable stones, or pour forth their complaints in half-suppressed, though audible tones. This, to me, was always a most affecting sight, and I repeated my visit to this interesting spot to enjoy and sympathise with the melancholy yet pleasing spectacle. The poor people sometimes sobbed aloud, and still found tears to pour out for the desolations of their 'beautiful house.' 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.'"—*Kitto's Pictorial Bible.*

Verse 16.—"*When the* LORD *shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.*" So sincere is God to his people, that he gives his own glory in hostage to them for their security; his own robes of glory are locked up in their prosperity and salvation: he will not, indeed he cannot, present himself in all his magnificence and royalty, till he hath made up his intended thoughts of mercy to his people; he is pleased to prorogue the time of his appearing in all his glory to the world till he hath actually accomplished their deliverance, that he and they may come forth together in their glory on the same day: "*When the* LORD *shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.*" The sun is ever glorious in the most cloudy day, but appears not so till it hath scattered the clouds that muffle it up from the sight of the lower world: God is glorious when the world sees him not: but his declarative glory then appears, when the glory of his mercy, truth and faithfulness break forth in his people's salvation. Now, what shame must this cover thy face with, O Christian, if thou shouldst not sincerely aim at thy God's glory, who loves thee, yea, all his children so dearly, as to ship his own glory and your happiness in one bottom, that he cannot now lose the one, and save the other!—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 16.—"*When the* LORD *shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.*" There are two reasons why the Lord appears thus glorious in this work rather than in any other. First, because it is a work that infinitely pleaseth him. Men choose to appear in their clothes and behaviour suitable to the work that they are to be employed in: the woman of Tekoah must feign herself to be a mourner when she goes on a mournful message; and David, when he goes on a doleful journey, covers his face, and puts on mourning apparel; but when Solomon is to be crowned, he goes in all his royalty; and a bride adorns herself gloriously when she is to be married: verily so doth the Lord, when he goes about a work he takes no pleasure in, he puts on his mourning apparel, he covers himself with a cloud and the heavens with blackness; when he is to do a strange work of judgment, then he mourns "How shall I give thee up Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." Hosea xi. 8. But the building of Zion doth infinitely please him, because Zion is as the apple of his eye to him; he bought Zion at a dear rate, with his own blood; he lays Zion in his bosom, he is ravished with Zion, Zion is his love, his dove, his fair one; he hath chosen Zion, and loves the gates of it, better than all the palaces of Jacob; and being so pleasing to him, no marvel if he put on all his glorious apparel when he is to adorn and build up Zion. And, secondly, it is because all the glory that he looks for to eternity must arise out of this one work of building Zion; this one work shall be the only monument of his glory to eternity: this goodly world, this heaven and earth, that you see and enjoy the use of, is set up only as a shop, as a workshop, to stand only for a week, for six or seven thousand years, ("a thousand years is with the Lord but as a day"); and when his work is done he will throw this piece of clay down again, and out of this he looks for no other glory than from a *cabul*, a land of dirt, or a shepherd's cottage, or a gourd which springs up in a night and withers in a day; but this piece he sets up for a higher end, to be the eternal mansion of his holiness and honour; this is his *metropolis*, his temple, his house

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where his fire and furnace is, his court, his glorious high throne, and therefore his glory is much concerned in this work. When Nebuchadnezzar would have a city for the honour of his kingdom, and the glory of his majesty, he will make it a stately piece. Solomon made all his kingdom very rich and glorious, but he made his court, and especially his throne, another manner of thing, so stately that the like was not to be seen in any other kingdom; and therefore no wonder though he appear in his glory in building up of that, which we may boldly say must be one day made as glorious as his wisdom can contrive, and his power bring to pass.—*Stephen Marshall, in a Sermon preached to the Right Honourable the House of Peers, entitled "God's Master-Piece,"* 1645.

Verses 16, 17.—"*Shall build—shall appear—will regard—and will not despise.*" These futures, in the original, are all present; "*buildeth—appeareth—regardeth—and despiseth not.*" The psalmist, in his confidence of the event, speaks of it as doing.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 17.—"*He will regard the prayer of the destitute,*" etc. The persons are here called "*the destitute.*" The Hebrew word which is here translated "*destitute*" doth properly signify *myrica*, a low shrub, *humiles myricæ*, low shrubs that grow in wildernesses, some think they were *juniper shrubs*, some a kind of wild *tamaris*, but a base wild shrub that grew nowhere but in a desolate forlorn place; and sometimes the word in the text is used to signify the deserts of Arabia, the sandy desert place of Arabia, which was a miserable wilderness. Now when this word is applied to men, it always means such as were *forsaken* men, *despised* men; such men as are stripped of all that is comfortable to them: either they never had children, or else their children are taken away from them, and all comforts banished, and themselves left utterly forlorn, like the barren heath in a desolate howling wilderness. These are the people of whom my text speaks, that the Lord will regard the prayer of "*the destitute;*" and this was now the state of the Church of God when they offered up this prayer, and yet by faith did foretell that God would grant such a glorious answer. . . . . .

This is also a lesson of singular comfort to every afflicted soul, to assure them their prayers and supplications are tenderly regarded before God. I have often observed such poor forsaken ones, who in their own eyes are brought very low, that of all other people they are most desirous to beg and obtain the prayers of their friends, when they see any that hath gifts, and peace, and cheerfulness of spirit, and liberty, and abilities to perform duties, O how glad they are to get such a man's prayers! "I beseech you, will you pray for me, will you please to remember me at the throne of grace," whereas, in truth, if we could give a right judgment, all such would rather desire the *poor*, and the *desolate*, to be *mediators* for them; for, certainly, whomsoever God neglects, he will listen to the cry of those that are forsaken and destitute. And therefore, O thou afflicted and tossed with tempests, who thinkest thou art wholly rejected by the Lord, continue to pour out thy soul to him; thou hast a faithful promise from him to be rewarded: "*he will regard the prayer of the destitute.*"—*Stephen Marshall, in a Sermon entitled "The Strong Helper,"* 1645.

Verse 17.—"*He will regard the prayer of the destitute.*" It is worthy of observation that he ascribes the redemption and restoration of the people to the prayers of the faithful. That is truly a free gift, and dependent wholly upon the divine mercy, and yet God himself often attributes it to our prayers, to stir us up and render us the more active in the pursuit of prayer.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 17.—"*The prayer of the destitute.*" A man that is destitute knows how to pray. He needs not any instructor. His miseries indoctrinate him wonderfully in the art of offering prayer. Let us know ourselves destitute, that we may know how to pray; destitute of strength, of wisdom, of due influence, of true happiness, of proper faith, of thorough consecration, of the knowledge of the Scriptures, of righteousness.

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These words introduce and stand in immediate connection with a prophecy of glorious things to be witnessed in the latter times. We profess to be eager for the accomplishment of those marvellous things; but are we offering the prayer of the destitute? On the contrary, is not the Church at large too much like the church at Laodicea? Will not a just interpretation of many of its acts and ways bring forth the words, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing?" And do not its prayers meet with this reproachful answer, "Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and knowest it not. Thy temporal affluence implies not spiritual affluence. Thy spiritual condition is inversely as the worldly prosperity that has turned thy head. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire. Give all thy trashy gold—trashy while it is with thee—give it to my poor; and I will give thee true gold, namely, a sense of thy misery and meanness; a longing for grace, purity, usefulness; a love of thy fellow-men; and my love shed abroad in thy heart."—*George Bowen.*

Verse 17.—"*Not despise their prayer.*" How many in every place (who have served the Lord in this great work) hath prayer helped at a dead lift? Prayer hath hitherto saved the kingdom. I remember a proud boast of our enemies, when we had lost *Bristol* and the *Vies*, they then sent abroad even into other kingdoms a triumphant paper, wherein they concluded all was now subdued to them, and among many other confident expressions, there was one to this purpose, *Nil restat superare Regem*, etc., which might be construed two ways; either thus,—*There remains nothing for the King to conquer, but only the prayers of a few fanatic people;* or thus,—*There is nothing left to conquer the King, but the prayers of a few fanatic people;* everything else was lost, all was now their own. And indeed we were then in a very low condition. Our strongholds taken, our armies melted away, our hearts generally failing us for fear, multitudes flying out of the kingdom, and many deserting the cause as desperate, making their peace at *Oxford;* nothing almost left us but *preces et lach rymæ;* but blessed be God, *prayer was not conquered;* they have found it the hardest wall to climb, the strongest brigade to overthrow; it hath hitherto preserved us, it hath raised up unexpected helps, and brought many unhoped for successes and deliverances. Let us therefore, under God, set the crown upon the head of prayer. Ye nobles and worthies, be ye all content to have it so; it will wrong none of you in your deserved praise; God and man will give you your due. *Many of you have done worthily, but prayer surpasses you all:* and this is no new thing, prayer hath always had the pre-eminence in the building of Zion. God hath reserved several works for several men and several ages; but in all ages and among all men, prayer hath been the chiefest instrument, especially in the building up of Zion.—*Stephen Marshall.*

Verse 17.—"*Not despise their prayer.*" He will, then, give ear to the suits of the poor, and not reject their supplications. But who will believe this? Is it likely that when God is in his glory, he will attend to such mean things as hearkening to the poor? Can it stand with the honour of his glory to stand reading petitions, and specially of men that come *in forma pauperis?* scarce credible indeed with men, who, raised in honour, keep a distance from the poor and count it a degree of falling to look downwards: but credible enough with God, who counts it his glory to regard the inglorious; and being the Most High, yet looks as low as to the lowest, and favours them most who are most despised. And this did Christ after his transfiguration, when he had appeared in his glory; he then shewed acts of greatest humility; he then washed the disciples' feet; and made Peter as much wonder to see his humbleness, as he had done before to see his glory.—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 18.—"*Shall praise the* LORD." The people whom God in mercy brings from a low and mean condition, are the people from whom God promises to receive praise and glory. Indeed, such is the selfishness of our corrupt nature, that if we are anything, or do anything, we are prone to forget

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God, and sacrifice to our own nets, and burn incense to our own yarn; inasmuch, that whenever God finds a people who shall either trust in him, or praise him, it must be "an afflicted and poor people," (Zeph. iii. 11—13; Ps. xxii. 22—25), or a people brought from such an estate: free grace is even most valued by such a people. And if you look all the Scripture over, you will find that all the praises and songs of deliverance that have been made to God have proceeded from a people that have thus judged of themselves, as those that were brought to nothing; but God in mercy had brought them back again from the gates of death, and usually until they had such apprehensions of themselves they never gave unto God the glory due unto his name.—*Stephen Marshall.*

Verse 18.—Expositors observe upon this text, that this redeemed Church takes no thought *concerning themselves*, about their own *ease*, *pleasure*, *wealth*, *gain*, or anything else which might accrue unto themselves by this deliverance, to make their own life easy or sweet; but their thoughts and studies are wholly laid out, how the present and succeeding generations should give all glory to God for it. . . . .

There are three special reasons why this should be the great work of the Lord's saved and rescued people, and why indeed they can do no other than study thus to exalt him. I. One is, because they well know that the Lord hath reserved nothing to himself but only his glory; the benefits he gives to them; all the sweetness and honey that can be found in them he gives them leave to suck out; but his glory and his praise is his own, and that which he hath wholly reserved; of that he is jealous, lest it should either be denied, eclipsed, diminished, or any the least violation offered to it in any kind. All God's people know this of him, and therefore they cannot but endeavour to preserve it for him. II. Secondly, besides, they know, as God is jealous in that point, so it is all the work that he hath appointed them to do; he hath therefore separated them to himself out of all nations of the world, to be his peculiar ones for this very end, that they might give him all the glory and praise of his mercy. "I have(said God) *created* him, *formed*, and *made* him *for my glory*." Isai. xliii. 7. This is the law of his *new creation*, which is as powerful in them as the law of *nature*, or the *first creation*, is in the rest of his works. And therefore with a holy and spiritual naturalness (if I may so call it) the hearts of all the saints are carried to give God the glory, as really as the stones are carried to the centre, or the fire to fly upwards: this is fixed in their hearts, the work of grace hath moulded them to it, that they can do no other but endeavour to exalt God, it being the very end why their spiritual life and all their other privileges are conferred upon them.

III. Yea, thirdly, they know their own interests are much concerned in God's glory, they never are losers by it: if in any work of God he want his praise, they will want their comfort; but if God be a gainer, they shall certainly be no losers. Whatever is poured upon the head of Christ—what ointment soever of praise or glory, it will in a due proportion fall down to the skirts of his garments; nor is there any other way to have any sweetness, comfort, praise, or glory to be derived unto themselves, but by giving all unto him to whom alone it belongeth, and then although he will never give away his glory—the glory of being the *fountain*, the *first*, *supreme*, *original giver* of all good; yet they shall have the glory of instruments, and of fellow workers with him, which is a glory and praise sufficient.—*Stephen Marshall.*

Verse 18 (*first clause*).—Calvin translates thus,—"*This shall be registered for the generations to come;*" and observes,—"The Psalmist intimates, that this will be a memorable work of God, the praise of which shall be handed down to succeeding ages. Many things are worthy of praise, which are soon forgotten; but the prophet distinguishes between the salvation of the Church, for which he makes supplication, and common benefits. By the word *register* he means that the history of this would be worthy of having a place in the

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public records, that the remembrance of it might be transmitted to future generations."

Verse 18.—"*This shall be written.*" Nothing is more tenacious than man's memory when he suffers an injury; nothing more lax if a benefit is conferred. For this reason God desires lest his gifts should fall out of mind, to have them committed to writing.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 20.—"*To hear the groaning of the prisoner.*" God takes notice not only of the prayers of his afflicted people, which are the language of grace; but even of their groans, which are the language of nature.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 20.—"*Appointed unto death.*" Who, in their captivity, are experiencing so much affliction, that it is manifest their cruel enemies are desirous of destroying them utterly; or, at least, of bringing them into such a low and pitiable state, as to blot out their name from among the nations of the earth.—*William Keatinge Clay.*

Verse 24.—"*O my God.*" The leaving out one word in a will may mar the estate and disappoint all a man's hopes; the want of this one word, *my* (God) is the wicked man's loss of heaven, and the dagger which will pierce his heart in hell to all eternity.

The degree of satisfaction in any good is according to the degree of our union to it, (hence our delight is greater in food than in clothes; and the saint's joy is greater in God in the other world than in this, because the union is nearer;) but where there is no property there is no union, therefore no complacency. The pronoun *my* is as much worth to the soul as the boundless portion. All our comfort is locked up in that private cabinet. Wine in the glass doth not cheer the heart, but taken down into the body. The property of the psalmist's in God was the mouth whereby he fed on those dainties which did so exceedingly delight him. No love potion was ever so effectual as this pronoun. When God saith to the soul, as Ahab to Benhadad "Behold, I am thine, and all that I have," who can tell how the heart leaps for joy in, and expires almost in desires after him upon such news! Others, like strangers, may behold his honour and excellencies, but this saint only, like the wife, enjoyeth him. Luther saith, Much religion lieth in pronouns. All our consolation, indeed, consisteth in this pronoun. It is the cup which holdeth all our cordial waters. I will undertake as bad as the devil is, he shall give the whole world, were it in his power, more freely than ever he offered it to Christ for his worship, for leave from God to pronounce those two words, My God. All the joys of the believer are hung upon this one string; break that asunder, and all is lost. I have sometimes thought how David rolls it as a lump of sugar under his tongue, as one loth to lose its sweetness too soon: "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower," Ps. xviii. 1, 2. This pronoun is the door at which the King of saints entereth into our hearts, with his whole train of delights and comforts.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 24.—"*Take me not away,*" is more exactly, Take me not *up*, with possible reference to the case of Elijah, "taken up."—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 24.—"*Take me not away in the midst of my days.*" The word is, "*Let me not ascend in the midst of my days,*" that is, before I have measured the usual course of life. Thus, *to ascend* is the same as to be *cut off;* death cuts off the best from this world, and then they ascend to a better. The word *ascend* is conceived to have in it a double allusion; first, to corn which is taken up by the hand of the reaper, and then laid down on the stubble. Secondly, unto the light of a candle, which as the candle spends, or as that which is the food of the fire is spending, ascends, and at last goes out and vanisheth.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 24.—"*Thy years are throughout all generations.*" The psalmist says of Christ, "*Thy years are throughout all generations,*" Ps. cii. 24; which psalm

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the apostle quoteth of him, Heb. i. 10. Let us trace his existence punctually through all times. Let us go from point to point, and see how in particulars the Scriptures accord with it. The first joint of time we will begin that chronology of his existence withal is that instant afore he was to come into the world.

First, We find him to have existed just afore he came into the world, the instance of his conception, Heb. x. 5, in these words, "Wherefore when he comes into the world, says he, A body hast thou prepared me." Ver. 7, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Here is a person distinct from God the Father, a *me*, an *I*, distinct also from that human nature he was to assume, which he terms a "body prepared." . . . . Therefore besides and afore that human nature there was a divine person that existed, that was not of this world, but that came into it, "when he cometh into the world, he says," etc., to become a part of it, and be manifested in it.

Secondly, We find him to have existed afore John the Baptist, though John was conceived and born some months afore him. I note these several joints of time because the Scripture notes them, and hath set a special mark upon them: John i. 15. "John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me." This priority of existence is that which John doth specially give witness to. And it is priority in existence, for he allegeth it as a reason why he was preferred afore him; "for he was before me."

Thirdly, We find him existing when all the prophets wrote and spake, 1 Pet. i. 11. The Spirit of Christ is said to have been in all the prophets, even as Paul, who came after Christ, also speaks, "You seek a proof of Christ speaking in me," 2 Cor. xiii. 3. And therefore he himself, whose Spirit it was, or whom he sent, must needs exist as a person sending him.

Fourthly, We find him existing in Moses' time, both because it was he that was tempted in the wilderness, "Neither let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents," 1 Cor. x. 9; and it was Christ that was the person said to be tempted by them, as well as now by us, as the word καὶ "as they also," evidently shows. And it points to that angel that was sent with them, Exod. xxiii. 20, 21, in whom the name of God was, and who as God had the power of pardoning sins, ver. 21. See also Acts vii. 35, Heb. xii. 26.

Fifthly, We find him existing in and afore Abraham's time: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am," John viii. 58.

Sixthly, We find him existing in the days of Noah, 1 Pet. iii. 19. He says of Christ, that he was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit." He evidently distinguisheth of two natures, his divine and human, even as Rom. i. 3, 4 and elsewhere; and then declares how by that divine nature, which he terms "Spirit," in which he was existent in Noah's times, he went and preached to those of the old world, whose souls are now in prison in hell. These words, "in Spirit," are not put to signify the subject of vivification; for such neither his soul nor Godhead could be said to be, for that is not quickened which was not dead; but for the principal and cause of his vivification, which his soul was not, but his Godhead was. And besides by his Spirit is not meant his soul, for that then must be supposed to have preached to souls in hell (where these are affirmed to be). Now, there is no preaching where there is no capacity of faith. But his meaning is, that those persons that lived in Noah's time, and were preached unto, their souls and spirits were now, when this was written, spirits in prison, that is, in hell. And therefore he also adds this word "sometimes": who were sometimes disobedient in Noah's days." These words give us to understand that this preaching was performed by Noah ministerially, yet by Christ in Noah; who according to his divine person was extant, and went with him, as with Moses, and the church in the wilderness, and preached unto them.

Seventhly, He was extant at the beginning of the world, "In the beginning

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was the Word." In which words, there being no predicate or attribute affirmed of this word, the sentence or affirmation is terminated or ended merely with his existence: "he was," and he was then, "in the beginning." He says not that he was made in the beginning, but that "he was in the beginning." And it is in the beginning absolutely, without any limitation. And therefore Moses's beginning, Gen. i. 1, is meant, as also the words after show, "All was made by him that was made;" and, ver. 10, the world he came into was made by him. And as from the beginning is usually taken from the first times or infancy of the world; so then, when God began to create, then was our Christ. And this here is set in opposition (John i. 14) unto the time of his being made flesh, lest that should have been thought his beginning. And unto this accords that of Heb. i. 10, where, speaking of Christ, out of Psalm cii., "*Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth;*" so as to be sure he existed then. But further, in Psalm cii. 24, it runs thus, "*Thy years are throughout all generations.*" We have run, you see, through all generations since the creation, and have found his years throughout them all. And yet lest that should be taken only of the generations of this world, he adds (as Rivet expounds it), "*Before thou laidst the foundation of the earth.*"

Eighthly, So then we come to this, that he hath been before the creation, yea, from everlasting.

But, *Ninthly*, If you would have his eternity yet more express, see Heb. vii. 3, where mentioning Melchisedec, Christ's type, he renders him to have been his type in this—"Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually." Where his meaning is to declare that, look what Melchisedec was *typicè*, or *umbraiter*, in a shadow, that our Christ was really and substantially.

Lastly, Add to this that in Micah v. 2, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting;" where he evidently speaks of two births Christ had, under the metaphor of going forth: one as man at Bethlehem in the fulness of time, the other as Son of God from everlasting. As Son of God, his goings forth (that is, his birth) are from everlasting. And it is termed, "goings forth," in the plural; because it is *actus continuus*, and hath been every moment continued from everlasting. As the sun begets light and beams every moment, so God doth his Son. So then we have *two everlastings* attributed to Christ's person; one to come, Heb. i. 10, and another past, here in Micah v. 2. And so as of God himself it is said, Ps. xc. 2, "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God," so also of Christ.—*Condensed from T. Goodwin's Treatise on "The Knowledge of God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ."*

Verse 25.—"*Earth.*" "*Heavens.*" He names here the most stable parts of the world, and the most beautiful parts of the creation, those that are freest from corruptibility and change, to illustrate thereby the immutability of God, that though the heavens and earth have a prerogative of fixedness above other parts of the world, and the creatures that reside below, the heavens remain the same as they were created, and the centre of the earth retains its fixedness, and are as beautiful and fresh in their age as they were in their youth many years ago, notwithstanding the change of the elements, fire and water being often turned into air, so that there may remain but little of that air which was first created, by reason of the continual transmutation; yet this firmness of the earth and heavens is not to be regarded in comparison of the unmoveableness and fixedness of the being of God. As their beauty comes short of the glory of his being, so doth their firmness come short of his stability.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 26.—"*They shall perish.*" The greater the corruption, the vaster the

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destruction. Some think that the fiery deluge shall ascend no higher than did the watery. It may be the *earth* shall be burned, that is the worst guest at the table, the common sewer of all other creatures, but shall the heavens pass away? It may be the airy heaven; but shall the starry heaven where God hath printed such figures of his glory? Yes, *cœlum, elementum, terra,* when *ignis ubique ferox ruptis regnabit habenis.* The former deluge is called the world's winter, the next the world's summer. The one was with a cold and moist element, the other shall be with an element hot and dry. But what then shall become of the saints? They shall be delivered out of all; walking like those three servants in the midst of that great furnace, the burning world, and not be scorched, because there is one among them to deliver them, "the Son of God," Dan. iii. 25, their Redeemer. But shall all quite perish? No, there is rather a mutation than an abolition of their substance. "*Thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed,*" not abolished. The concupiscence shall pass, not the essence; the form, not the nature. In the altering of an old garment, we destroy it not, but trim it, refresh it, and make it seem new. They pass, they do not perish; the dross is purged, the metal stays. The corrupt quality shall be renewed, and all things restored to that original beauty wherein they were created. "The end of all things is at hand," 1 Pet. iv. 7: an end of us, an end of our days, an end of our ways, and end of our thoughts. If a man could say as Job's messenger, I alone am escaped, it were somewhat; or might find an ark with Noah. But there is no ark to defend them from that heat, but only the bosom of Jesus Christ.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 26.—"*Like a garment.*" The whole creation is as a garment, wherein the Lord shows his power clothed unto men; whence in particular he is said to clothe himself with light as with a garment. And in it is the hiding of his power. Hid it is, as a man is hid with a garment; not that he should not be seen at all, but that he should not be seen perfectly and as he is. It shows the man, and he is known by it; but also it hides him, that he is not perfectly or fully seen. So are the works of creation unto God, he so far makes them his garment or clothing as in them to give out some instances of his power and wisdom; but he is also hid in them, in that by them no creature can come to the full and perfect knowledge of him. Now, when this work shall cease, and God shall unclothe or unveil all his glory to his saints, and they shall know him perfectly, see him as he is, so far as a created nature is capable of that comprehension, then will he lay them aside and fold them up, at least as to that use, as easily as a man lays aside a garment that he will wear or use no more. This lies in the metaphor.—*John Owen.*

Verse 27.—"*Thou art the same.*" The essence of God, with all the perfections of his nature, are pronounced the same, without any variation from eternity to eternity. So that the text doth not only assert the eternal duration of God, but his immutability in that duration; his eternity is signified in that expression, "thou shalt endure;" his immutability in this, "thou art the same." To endure, argues indeed this immutability as well as eternity; for what endures is not changed, and what is changed doth not endure. "*But thou art the same,*" אתה הוא, doth more fully signify it. He could not be the same if he could be changed into any other thing than what he is. The psalmist therefore puts, not thou *hast been* or *shall be*, but *thou art* the same, without any alteration; thou art the same, that is, the same God, the same in essence and nature, the same in will and purpose, thou dost change all other things as thou pleaseth; but thou art immutable in every respect, and receivest no shadow of change, though never so light and small. The psalmist here alludes to the name *Jehovah, I am*, and doth not only ascribe immutability to God, but exclude everything else from partaking in that perfection.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 28.—"*The children of thy servants shall continue.*" In what sense is "*children*" taken? Either the children of their flesh, or of their faith. Some say the children of the same faith with the godly teachers and servants of the

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Lord, begotten by them to God, as noting the perpetuity of the church, who shall in every age bring forth children to God. 'Tis the comfort of God's people to see a young brood growing up to continue his remembrance in the world, that when they die religion shall not die with them, nor the succession of the church be interrupted. This sense is not altogether incongruous; but rather I think the children of their body are here intended; it being a blessing often promised: see the next psalm, verse 17. "The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children." "*Shall continue;*" "*shall be established.*" In what sense is it spoken? Some think only *pro more fœderis*, according to the fashion of that covenant which the people of God were then under, when eternity was but more darkly revealed and shadowed out, either by long life, or the continuance of their name in their posterity, which was a kind of literal immortality. Clearly such a kind of regard is had, as appeareth by that which you find in Ps. xxxvii. 28. "*The* LORD *loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever.*" How? since they die as others do: mark the antithesis, and that will explain it. "*They are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.*" They are preserved in their posterity. Children are but the parents multiplied, and the parent continued, 'tis *nodosa æternitas;* when the father's life is run out to the last, there is a knot tied, and the line is still continued by the child. I confess, temporal blessings, such as long life, and the promise of a happy posterity, are more visible in the eye of that dispensation of the covenant; but yet God still taketh care for the children of his people, and many promises run that way that belong to the gospel-administration, and still God's service is the surest way to establish a family, as sin is the ready way to root it out. And if it doth not always fall out accordingly, yet for the most part it doth; and we are no competent judges of God's dispensations in this kind, because we see Providence by pieces, and have not the skill to set them together; but at the day of judgment, when the whole contexture of God's dealings is laid before us we shall clearly understand how *the children of his servants continue, and their seed is established.*—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 28.—O the folly of the world, that seeks to make perpetuities to their houses by devises in the law, which may perhaps reach to continue their estates, but can it reach to continue their seed? It may entail lands to their heirs, but can it entail heirs to their lands? No, God knows! This is a perpetuity of only God's making, a privilege of only God's servants: for "*The children of his servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before him;*" but that any others shall continue is no part of David's warrant.—*Sir R. Baker.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Title.—I. Afflicted men may pray. II. Afflicted men should pray even when overhelmed. III. Afflicted men can pray—for what is wanted is a pouring out of their complaint, not an oratorical display. IV. Afflicted men are accepted in prayer—for this prayer is placed on record.

Verses 1, 2.—Five steps to the mercy-seat. The psalmist prays for, I. Audience: "Hear my prayer." II. Access: "Let my cry come before thee." III. Unveiling: "Hide not thy face." IV. An intent ear: "Incline thine ear." V. Answer.—*C. Davis.*

Verses 1, 17, 19, 20.—An interesting discourse may be founded upon these passages. I. The Lord entreated to hear—verse 1. II. The Promise given

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that he will hear—verse 17. III. The Record that the Lord has heard—verses 19 and 20.

Verse 2.—I. Prayer in trouble is most needed. II. Prayer in trouble is most heeded. III. Prayer in trouble is most speeded: "Answer me speedily." Or, I. Prayer in trouble: "In the day," etc. II. The prayer of trouble: "Hide not thy face;" not remove the trial, but be with me in it. A fiery furnace is a paradise when God is with us there.—*G. R.*

Verse 2 (*first clause*).—He deprecates the loss of the divine countenance when under trouble. I. That would intensify it a thousandfold. II. That would deprive him of strength to bear the trouble. III. That would prevent his acting so as to glorify God in the trouble. IV. That might injure the result of the trouble.

Verse 2 (*last clause*).—I. We often need to be answered speedily. II. God can so answer. III. God has so answered. IV. God has promised so to answer.

Verses 3—11.—I. The causes of grief. 1. The brevity of life. *v.* 3. 2. Bodily pain. *v.* 3. 3. Dejection of spirit. *v.* 4, 5. 4. Solitariness. *v.* 6, 7. 5. Reproach. *v.* 8. 6. Humiliation. *v.* 9. 7. The hidings of God's countenance. *v.* 10. 8. Wasting away. *v.* 11. II. The eloquence of grief. 1. The brevity of life is as vanishing "smoke." 2. Bodily pain is fire in the bones. 3. Dejection of spirit is "withered grass." Who can eat when the heart is sad? 4. Solitariness is like "The pelican in the wilderness, the owl in the desert, and the sparrow upon the housetop." 5. Reproach is being surrounded by madmen—"they that are mad." 6. Humiliation is "eating ashes like bread," and "drinking tears." 7. The hidings of God's countenance is lifting up in order to be cast down. 8. Wasting away is a shadow declining and grass withering.—*G. R.*

Verse 4.—Unbelieving sorrow makes us forget to use proper means for our support. I. We forget the promises. II. Forget the past and its experiences. III. Forget the Lord Jesus, our life. IV. Forget the everlasting love of God. This leads to weakness, faintness, etc., and is to be avoided.

Verse 6.—This as a text, together with ciii. 5, makes an interesting contrast, and gives scope for much experimental teaching.

Verse 7.—The evils and benefits of solitude; when it may be sought, and when it becomes a folly. Or, the mournful watcher—alone, outside the pale of communion, insignificant, wishful for fellowship, set apart to watch.

Verse 9.—The sorrows of the saints—their number, bitterness, sources, correctives, influences, and consolations.

Verse 10.—I. The trial of trials—*thine* indignation and *thy* wrath. II. The aggravation of that trial—former favour, "thou hast lifted me up," etc. III. The best behaviour under it: see former verse, and verses 12 and 13.

Verse 10 (*last clause*).—The prosperity of a church or an individual often followed by declension; worldly aggrandisement frequently succeeded by affliction; great joy in the Lord very generally succeeded by trial.

Verses 11, 12.—*I* and *Thou*, or the notable contrast. I. *I;* my days are like a shadow, 1. Because it is unsubstantial; because it partakes of the nature of the darkness which is to absorb it; because the longer it becomes the briefer its continuance. 2. I am like grass cut down by the scythe; scorched by drought. II. *Thou.* Lord. Ever enduring. Ever memorable. Ever the study of passing generations of men.—*C. D.*

Verse 13.—I. Zion often needs restoration. It needs "mercy." II. Its restoration is certain: "Thou shalt arise," etc. III. The seasons of its restoration are determined. There is a "time" to favour her; a "set" time. IV. Intimations of those coming seasons are often given "The time, the set time, is come."—*G. R.*

Verses 13, 14.—I. Visitation expected. II. Predestination relied upon. III. Evidence observed. IV. Enquiry suggested—Do we take pleasure in her stones? etc.

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Verses 13, 14.—The interest of the Lord's people in the concerns of Zion one of the surest signs of her returning prosperity.

Verse 15.—The inward prosperity of the church essential to her power in the world.

Verse 16.—God is Zion's purchaser, architect, builder, inhabitant, Lord. I. Zion built up. Conversions frequent; confessions numerous; union firm; edification solid; missions extended. II. God glorified. In its very foundation; by its ministry; by difficulties and enemies; by poor workers, and poor materials; and even by our failures. III. Hope excited. Because we may expect the Lord to glorify himself. IV. Inquiry suggested. Am I concerned, as built, or building? not merely doctrinally, but experimentally?

Verse 17.—I. The destitute pray. II. They pray most. III. They pray best. IV. They pray most effectually. Or the surest way to succeed in prayer is to pray as the destitute; show the reason of this.

Verse 18.—I. A memorial. II. A magnificat.—*W. Durban.*

Verses 18—21.—I. Misery in extremis. II. Divinity observant. III. Deity actively assisting. IV. Glory consequently published.

Verses 19—22.—I. The notice which God takes of the world, *v.* 19. 1. The place from which he beholds it: "from heaven," not from an earthly point of view. 2. The character in which he beholds it; "from the height of his sanctuary," from the mercy-seat. II. What attracts his notice most in the world. The groaning of the prisoner and of those appointed to death. III. The purpose for which he notices them. "To loose," etc.; "to declare," etc. 1. For human comfort. 2. For his own glory. IV. When his notice is thus fixed upon the earth. "When," etc., *v.* 22.—*G. R.*

Verse 23.—For the sick. I. Submission—The Lord sent the trial—"*He* weakeneth," etc. II. Service—exonerated from some work, he now requires of me patience, earnestness, etc. III. Preparation—for going home. IV. Prayer—for others to occupy my place. V. Expectation—I shall soon be in heaven, now that my days are shortened.

Verse 24.—I. *The prayer.* "Take me not away," etc. 1. Not in the midst of life, is the prayer of some. 2. Not in the midst of worldly prosperity is the prayer of many, for the sake of those dependent upon them. 3. Not in the midst of spiritual growth, is the prayer of not a few: "Oh spare me, that I may recover strength," etc. 4. Not in the midst of Christian work and usefulness, is the prayer of others. II. *The plea.* "Thy years," etc.; years are plentiful with thee, therefore to give me longer days will be an easy gift—and thine own are throughout all generations.—*G. R.*

Verses 25—27.—I. The unchangeableness of God amidst past changes: "of old," etc. 1. He was the same before as after he had laid the foundations of the earth. 2. He was the same after as before. II. The unchangeableness of God amidst future changes. "They shall perish," etc. 1. The same before they perish as after. 2. After as before. III. The unchangeableness of God in the past and the future. "Thou art the same," etc.—*G. R.*

Verses 26, 27.—I. How far God may change—only in his garments, or outward manifestations of creation and providence. II. Wherein he cannot change—his nature, attributes, covenant, love, etc. III. The comfortable truths which may be safely inferred, or which gather support from this fact.

Verses 26, 27.—I. The material universe of God. 1. No more to him than a garment to the wearer. 2. Ever waxing old, but he the same. 3. Soon to be changed and left to perish, but of his years no end. II. Our relation to each—1. Let us never love the dress more than the wearer. 2. Nor trust more in the changeful than in the abiding. 3. Nor live for that which will die out.

Verse 28.—The true apostolical succession. I. There always will be saints. II. They will frequently be the seed of the saints after the flesh. III. They will always be the spiritual seed of the godly, for God converts one by means of another. IV. We should order our efforts with an eye to the church's future.

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WORKS ON THE HUNDRED AND SECOND PSALM.

BISHOP FISHER'S *Treatise on the Penitential Psalms.* (See "Treasury of David," Vol. II., p. 114.) There is an edition in 12mo., printed in the year MDCCXIV., besides those referred to as above.

In "*Meditations on Twenty select Psalms*, by Sir ANTHONY COPE, Chamberlain to Queen Katherine Parr. Reprinted from the edition of 1547; . . . . By WILLIAM H. COPE. M.A. 1848," there is a Meditation on this psalm.

Meditations and Disquisitions upon the Seven Psalms of David, commonly called the Penitentiall Psalmes, By *Sir* RICHARD BAKER, *Knight.* 1639. [pp. 139—180.]

Zion's Joy in her King Coming in his Glory. Wherein the estate of the Poore distressed Church of the Gentiles (travailing in the Wildernesse towards the new Jerusalem of the Jewes) in her utmost extremities, and height of her Joyes, is lively delineated; In some Meditations upon that Propheticall Psalme 102, wherein the sense is opened, and many difficult places of Scripture inlightned by a harmony, and consent of the Scriptures. Delightfull and profitable to be read in these times of the Churches troubles, and much longed for restauration and deliverance. By FINIENS CANUS VOVE. Compiled in Exile, and lately now revised and somewhat augmented as the weight of the Subject and the revolution of the times required. . . . . 1643. [4to.]

In "*Sermons on the Seven Penitential Psalms, Preached during Lent*, 1838," by the Rev. CHARLES OXENDON, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

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PSALM CIII.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David.—*Doubtless by David; it is in his own style when at its best, and we should attribute it to his later years when he had a higher sense of the preciousness of pardon, because a keener sense of sin, than in his younger days. His clear sense of the frailty of life indicates his weaker years, as also does the very fulness of his praiseful gratitude. As in the lofty Alps some peaks rise above all others, so among even the inspired psalms there are heights of song which overtop the rest. This one hundred and third psalm has ever seemed to us to be the Monte Rosa of the divine chain of mountains of praise, glowing with a ruddier light than any of the rest. It is as the apple tree among the trees of the wood, and its golden fruit has a flavour such as no fruit ever bears unless it has been ripened in the full sunshine of mercy. It is man's reply to the benedictions of his God, his Song on the Mount answering to his Redeemer's Sermon on the Mount. Nebuchadnezzar adored his idol with flute, harp, sacbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music; and David, in far nobler style awakens all the melodies of heaven and earth in honour of the one only living and true God. Our attempt at exposition is commenced under an impressive sense of the utter impossibility of doing justice to so sublime a composition; we call upon our soul and all that is within us to aid in the pleasurable task; but, alas, our soul is finite, and our all of mental faculty far too little for the enterprize. There is too much in the psalm for a thousand pens to write, it is one of those all-comprehending Scriptures which is a Bible in itself, and it might alone almost suffice for the hymn-book of the church.*

DIVISIONS.—*First the Psalmist sings of personal mercies which he had himself received*—5; *then he magnifies the attributes of Jehovah as displayed in his dealings with his people*, 6—19; *and he closes by calling upon all the creatures in the universe to adore the Lord and join with himself in blessing Jehovah, the ever gracious.*

EXPOSITION.

BLESS the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, *bless* his holy name.

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;

5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good *things; so that* thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

1. "*Bless the Lord O my soul.*" Soul music is the very soul of music. The psalmist strikes the best key-note when he begins with stirring up his inmost self to magnify the Lord. He soliloquizes, holds self-communion and exhorts himself, as though he felt that dulness would all too soon steal over his faculties, as, indeed, it will over us all, unless we are diligently on the watch. Jehovah is worthy to be praised by us in that highest style of adoration which is intended by the term *bless*—"All thy works praise thee, O God, but thy saints shall bless thee." Our very life and essential self should be engrossed with this delightful service, and each one of us should arouse his own heart to the engagement. Let others forbear if they can: "Bless the Lord, O MY soul." Let others murmur, but do thou *bless*. Let others bless themselves and their idols, but do thou bless *the* LORD. Let others use only their tongues, but as for me I will cry, "Bless the Lord, O my *soul*." "*And all that is within me, bless his holy name.*" Many are our faculties, emotions, and capacities, but

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God has given them all to us, and they ought all to join in chorus to his praise. Half-hearted, ill-conceived, unintelligent praises are not such as we should render to our loving Lord. If the law of justice demanded all our heart and soul and mind for the Creator, much more may the law of gratitude put in a comprehensive claim for the homage of our whole being to the God of grace. It is instructive to note how the psalmist dwells upon the *holy* name of God, as if his holiness were dearest to him; or, perhaps, because the holiness or wholeness of God was to his mind the grandest motive for rendering to him the homage of his nature in its wholeness. Babes may praise the divine goodness, but fathers in grace magnify his holiness. By *the name* we understand the revealed character of God, and assuredly those songs which are suggested, not by our fallible reasoning and imperfect observation, but by unerring inspiration, should more than any others arouse all our consecrated powers.

2. "*Bless the* LORD, *O my soul.*" He is in real earnest, and again calls upon himself to arise. Had he been very sleepy before? Or was he now doubly sensible of the importance, the imperative necessity of adoration? Certainly, he uses no vain repetitions, for the Holy Spirit guides his pen; and thus he shews us that we have need, again and again, to bestir ourselves when we are about to worship God, for it would be shameful to offer him anything less than the utmost our souls can render. These first verses are a tuning of the harp, a screwing up of the loosened strings that not a note may fail in the sacred harmony. "*And forget not all his benefits.*" Not so much as one of the divine dealings should be forgotten, they are all really beneficial to us, all worthy of himself, and all subjects for praise. Memory is very treacherous about the best things; by a strange perversity, engendered by the fall, it treasures up the refuse of the past and permits priceless treasures to lie neglected, it is tenacious of grievances and holds benefits all too loosely. It needs spurring to its duty, though that duty ought to be its delight. Observe that he calls *all* that is within him to remember *all* the Lord's benefits. For our task our energies should be suitably called out. God's all cannot be praised with less than our all.

Reader, have we not cause enough at this time to bless him who blesses us? Come, let us read our diaries and see if there be not choice favours recorded there for which we have rendered no grateful return. Remember how the Persian king, when he could not sleep, read the chronicles of the empire, and discovered that one who had saved his life had never been rewarded. How quickly did he do him honour! The Lord has saved us with a great salvation, shall we render no recompense? The name of *ingrate* is one of the most shameful that a man can wear; surely we cannot be content to run the risk of such a brand. Let us awake then, and with intense enthusiasm bless Jehovah.

3. "*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.*" Here David begins his list of blessings received, which he rehearses as themes and arguments for praise. He selects a few of the choicest pearls from the casket of divine love, threads them on the string of memory, and hangs them about the neck of gratitude. Pardoned sin is, in our experience, one of the choicest boons of grace, one of the earliest gifts of mercy,—in fact, the needful preparation for enjoying all that follows it. Till iniquity is forgiven, healing, redemption, and satisfaction are unknown blessings. Forgiveness is first in the order of our spiritual experience, and in some respects first in value. The pardon granted is a present one—*forgiveth;* it is continual, for he still *forgiveth;* it is divine, for God gives it; it is far reaching, for it removes *all* our sins; it takes in omissions as well as commissions, for both these are *in-equities;* and it is most effectual, for it is as real as the healing, and the rest of the mercies with which it is placed. "*Who healeth all thy diseases.*" When the cause is gone, namely, iniquity, the effect ceases. Sicknesses of body and soul came into the world by sin, and as sin is eradicated, diseases bodily, mental, and spiritual will vanish, till "the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick." Many-sided is the character of our

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heavenly Father, for, having forgiven as a judge, he then cures as a physician. He is all things to us, as our needs call for him, and our infirmities do but reveal him in new characters.

> "In him is only good,
> In me is only ill,
> My ill but draws his goodness forth,
> And me he loveth still."

God gives efficacy to medicine for the body, and his grace sanctifies the soul. Spiritually we are daily under his care, and he visits us, as the surgeon does his patient; *healing* still (for that is the exact word) each malady as it arises. No disease of our soul baffles his skill, he goes on healing *all*, and he will do so till the last trace of taint has gone from our nature. The two *alls* of this verse are further reasons for *all* that is within us praising the Lord.

The two blessings of this verse the psalmist was personally enjoying, he sang not of others but of himself, or rather of his Lord, who was daily forgiving and healing him. He must have known that it was so, or he could not have sung of it. He had no doubt about it, he felt in his soul that it was so, and, therefore, he bade his pardoned and restored soul bless the Lord with all its might.

4. "*Who redeemeth thy life from destruction.*" By purchase and by power the Lord redeems us from the spiritual death into which we had fallen, and from the eternal death which would have been its consequence. Had not the death penalty of sin been removed, our forgiveness and healing would have been incomplete portions of salvation, fragments only, and but of small value, but the removal of the guilt and power of sin is fitly attended by the reversal of the sentence of death which had been passed upon us. Glory be to our great Substitute, who delivered us from going down into the pit, by giving himself to be our ransom. Redemption will ever constitute one of the sweetest notes in the believer's grateful song. "*Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.*" Our Lord does nothing by halves, he will not stay his hand till he has gone to the uttermost with his people. Cleansing, healing, redemption, are not enough, he must needs make them kings and crown them, and the crown must be far more precious than if it were made of corruptible things, such as silver and gold; it is studded with gems of grace and lined with the velvet of lovingkindness; it is decked with the jewels of mercy, but made soft for the head to wear by a lining of tenderness. Who is like unto thee, O Lord! God himself crowns the princes of his family, for their best things come from him directly and distinctly; they do not earn the crown, for it is of *mercy* not of merit; they feel their own unworthiness of it, therefore he deals with *tenderness;* but he is resolved to bless them, and, therefore, he is ever *crowning* them, always surrounding their brows with coronets of mercy and compassion. He always crowns the edifice which he commences, and where he gives pardon he gives acceptance too. "Since thou wast precious in my sight thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." Our sin deprived us of all our honours, a bill of attainder was issued against us as traitors; but he who removed the sentence of death by redeeming us from destruction, restores to us more than all our former honours by crowning us anew. Shall God crown us and shall not we crown him? Up, my soul, and cast thy crown at his feet, and in lowliest reverence worship him, who has so greatly exalted thee, as to lift thee from the dunghill and set thee among princes.

5. "*Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things,*" or rather "filling with good thy soul." No man is ever filled to satisfaction but a believer, and only God himself can satisfy even him. Many a worldling is satiated, but not one is satisfied. God satisfies the very soul of man, his noblest part, his ornament and glory; and of consequence he satisfies his mouth, however hungry and craving it might otherwise be. Soul-satisfaction loudly calls for soul-praise, and when the mouth is filled with good it is bound to speak good of him

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who filled it. Our good Lord bestows really *good things*, not vain toys and idle pleasures; and these he is always giving, so that from moment to moment he is *satisfying* our soul with good: shall we not be still praising him? If we never cease to bless him till he ceases to bless us, our employment will be eternal. "*So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*" Renewal of strength, amounting to a grant of a new lease of life, was granted to the psalmist; he was so restored to his former self that he grew young again, and looked as vigorous as an eagle, whose eye can gaze upon the sun, and whose wing can mount above the storm. Our version refers to the annual moulting of the eagle, after which it looks fresh and young; but the original does not appear to allude to any such fact of natural history, but simply to describe the diseased one as so healed and strengthened, that he became as full of energy as the bird which is strongest of the feathered race, most fearless, most majestic, and most soaring. He who sat moping with the owl in the last psalm, here flies on high with the eagle: the Lord works marvellous changes in us, and we learn by such experiences to bless his holy name. To grow from a sparrow to an eagle, and leave the wilderness of the pelican to mount among the stars, is enough to make any man cry, "Bless the Lord, O my soul."

Thus is the endless chain of grace complete. Sin is forgiven, its power subdued, and its penalty averted, then we are honoured, supplied, and our very nature renovated, till we are as new-born children in the household of God. O Lord we must bless thee, and we will; as thou dost withhold nothing from us so we would not keep back from thy praise one solitary power of our nature, but with all our heart, and soul, and strength praise thy holy name.

6 The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.

7 He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

8 The LORD *is* merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

9 He will not always chide: neither will he keep *his anger* for ever.

10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, *so* great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

12 As far as the east is from the west, *so* far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

13 Like as a father pitieth *his* children, *so* the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust.

15 *As for* man, his days *are* as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

17 But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

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19 The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

6. "*The* LORD *executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.*" Our own personal obligations must not absorb our song; we must also magnify the Lord for his goodness to others. He does not leave the poor and needy to perish at the hands of their enemies, but interposes on their behalf, for he is the executor of the poor and the executioner of the cruel. When his people were in Egypt he heard their groanings and brought them forth, but he overthrew Pharaoh in the Red Sea. Man's injustice shall receive retribution at the hand of God. Mercy to his saints demands vengeance on their persecutors, and he will repay it. No blood of martyrs shall be shed in vain; no groans of confessors in prison shall be left without inquisition being made concerning them. [*All* wrongs shall be righted, *all* the oppressed shall be avenged. Justice may at times leave the courts of man, but it abides upon the tribunal of God. For this every right-minded person will bless God.] Were he careless of his creature's good, did he neglect the administration of justice, did he suffer high-handed oppressors finally to escape, we should have greater reason for trembling than rejoicing; it is not so, however, for our God is a God of justice, and by him actions are weighed; he will mete out his portion to the proud and make the tyrant bite the dust,—yea, often he visits the haughty persecutor even in this life, so that "the Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth."

7. "*He made known his ways unto Moses.*" Moses was made to see the manner in which the Lord deals with men; he saw this at each of the three periods of his life, in the court, in retirement, and at the head of the tribes of Israel. To him the Lord gave specially clear manifestations of his dispensations and modes of ruling among mankind, granting to him to see more of God than had before been seen by mortal man, while he communed with him upon the mount. "*His acts unto the children of Israel.*" They saw less than Moses, for they beheld the deeds of God without understanding his method therein, yet this was much, very much, and might have been more if they had not been so perverse; the stint was not in the revelation, but in the hardness of their hearts. It is a great act of sovereign grace and condescending love when the Lord reveals himself to any people, and they ought to appreciate the distinguished favour shown to them. We, as believers in Jesus, know the Lord's *ways* of covenant grace, and we have by experience been made to see his *acts* of mercy towards us; how heartily ought we to praise our divine teacher, the Holy Spirit, who has made these things known to us, for had it not been for him we should have continued in darkness unto this day. "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and not unto the world?" Why hast thou made us "of the election who have obtained it" while the rest are blinded?

Observe how prominent is the personality of God in all this gracious teaching—"*He* made known." He did not leave Moses to discover truth for himself, but became his instructor. What should we ever know if he did not make it known? God alone can reveal himself. If Moses needed the Lord to make him know, how much more do we who are so much inferior to the great lawgiver?

8. "*The* LORD *is merciful and gracious.*" Those with whom he deals are sinners. However much he favours them they are guilty and need mercy at his hands, nor is he slow to compassionate their lost estate, or reluctant by his grace to lift them out of it. Mercy pardons sin, grace bestows favour: in both the Lord abounds. This is that way of his which he made known to Moses (Ex. xxxiv. 6), and in that way he will abide as long as the age of grace shall last, and men are yet in this life. He who "executeth righteousness and judgment," yet delighteth in mercy. "*Slow to anger.*" He can be angry, and can deal out righteous indignation upon the guilty, but it is his strange work;

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he lingers long, with loving pauses, tarrying by the way to give space for repentance and opportunity for accepting his mercy. Thus deals he with the greatest sinners, and with his own children much more so: towards them his anger is shortlived and never reaches into eternity, and when it is shown in fatherly chastisements he does not afflict willingly, and soon pities their sorrows. From this we should learn to be ourselves slow to anger; if the Lord is longsuffering under our great provocations how much more ought we to endure the errors of our brethren! "*And plenteous in mercy.*" Rich in it, quick in it, overflowing with it; and so had he need to be or we should soon be consumed. He is God, and not man, or our sins would soon drown his love; yet above the mountains of our sins the floods of his mercy rise.

> "Plenteous grace with thee is found,
> Grace to cover all my sin;
> Let the healing streams abound,
> Make and keep me pure within."

All the world tastes of his sparing mercy, those who hear the gospel partake of his inviting mercy, the saints live by his saving mercy, are preserved by his upholding mercy, are cheered by his consoling mercy, and will enter heaven through his infinite and everlasting mercy. Let grace abounding be our hourly song in the house of our pilgrimage. Let those who feel that they live upon it glorify the plenteous fountain from which it so spontaneously flows.

9. "*He will not always chide.*" He will sometimes, for he cannot endure that his people should harbour sin in their hearts, but not for ever will he chasten them; as soon as they turn to him and forsake their evil ways he will end the quarrel. He might find constant cause for striving with us, for we have always something in us which is contrary to his holy mind, but he refrains himself lest our spirits should fail before him. It will be profitable for any one of us who may be at this time out of conscious fellowship with the Lord, to inquire at his hands the reason for his anger, saying, "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me?" For he is easily entreated of, and soon ceaseth from his wrath. When his children turn from their sins he soon turns from his chidings. "*Neither will he keep his anger for ever.*" He bears no grudges. The Lord would not have his people harbour resentments, and in his own course of action he sets them a grand example. When the Lord has chastened his child he has done with his anger: he is not punishing as a judge, else might his wrath burn on, but he is acting as a father, and, therefore, after a few blows he ends the matter, and presses his beloved one to his bosom as if nothing had happened; or if the offence lies too deep in the offender's nature to be thus overcome, he continues to correct, but he never ceases to love, and he does not suffer his anger with his people to pass into the next world, but receives his erring child into his glory.

10. "*He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*" Else had Israel perished outright, and we also had long ago been consigned to the lowest hell. We ought to praise the Lord for what he has not done as well as for what he has wrought for us; even the negative side deserves our adoring gratitude. Up to this moment, at our very worst estate, we have never suffered as we deserved to suffer; our daily lot has not been apportioned upon the rule of what we merited, but on the far different measure of undeserved kindness. Shall we not bless the Lord? Every power of our being might have been rent with anguish, instead of which we are all in the enjoyment of comparative happiness, and many of us are exceedingly favoured with inward joy; let then every faculty, yea, all that is within us, bless his holy name.

11. "*For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.*" Boundless in extent towards his chosen is the mercy of the Lord; it is no more to be measured than the height of heaven or the heaven of heavens. "*Like the height of the heaven*" is the original language, which implies other points of comparison besides extent, and suggests sublimity,

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grandeur, and glory. As the lofty heavens canopy the earth, water it with dews and rains, enlighten it with sun, moon, and stars, and look down upon it with unceasing watchfulness, even so the Lord's mercy from above covers all his chosen, enriches them, embraces them, and stands for ever as their dwelling-place. The idea of our version is a very noble one, for who shall tell how exceeding great is the height of heaven? Who can reach the first of the fixed stars, and who can measure the utmost bounds of the starry universe? Yet so great is his mercy! Oh, that great little word so! All this mercy is for "*them that fear him;*" there must be a humble, hearty reverence of his authority, or we cannot taste of his grace. Godly fear is one of the first products of the divine life in us, it is the beginning of wisdom, yet it fully ensures to its possessor all the benefits of divine mercy, and is, indeed, here and elsewhere, employed to set forth the whole of true religion. Many a true child of God is full of filial fear, and yet at the same time stands trembling as to his acceptance with God; this trembling is groundless, but it is infinitely to be preferred to that baseborn presumption, which incites men to boast of their adoption and consequent security, when all the while they are in the gall of bitterness. Those who are presuming upon the infinite extent of divine mercy, should here be led to consider that although it is wide as the horizon and high as the stars, yet it is only meant for them that fear the Lord, and as for obstinate rebels, they shall have justice without mercy measured out to them.

12. "*As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*" O glorious verse, no word even upon the inspired page can excel it! Sin is removed from us by a miracle of love! What a load to move, and yet is it removed so far that the distance is incalculable. Fly as far as the wing of imagination can bear you, and if you journey through space eastward, you are further from the west at every beat of your wing. If sin be removed so far, then we may be sure that the scent, the trace, the very memory of it must be entirely gone. If this be the distance of its removal, there is no shade of fear of its ever being brought back again; even Satan himself could not achieve such a task. Our sins are gone, Jesus has borne them away. Far as the place of sunrise is removed from yonder west, where the sun sinks when his day's journey is done, so far were our sins carried by our scapegoat nineteen centuries ago, and now if they be sought for, they shall not be found, yea, they shall not be, saith the Lord. Come, my soul, awaken thyself thoroughly and glorify the Lord for this richest of blessings. Hallelujah. The Lord alone could remove sin at all, and he has done it in a godlike fashion, making a final sweep of all our transgressions.

13. "*Like as a father pitieth his children, so the* LORD *pitieth them that fear him.*" To those who truly reverence his holy name, the Lord is a father and acts as such. These he pities, for in the very best of men the Lord sees much to pity, and when they are at their best state they still need his compassion. This should check every propensity to pride, though at the same time it should yield us the richest comfort. Fathers feel for their children, especially when they are in pain, they would like to suffer in their stead, their sighs and groans cut them to the quick: thus sensitive towards us is our heavenly Father. We do not adore a god of stone, but the living God, who is tenderness itself. He is at this moment compassionating us, for the word is in the present tense; his pity never fails to flow, and we never cease to need it.

14. "*For he knoweth our frame.*" He knows how we are made, for he made us. Our make and build, our constitution and temperament, our prevailing infirmity and most besetting temptation he well perceives, for he searches our inmost nature. "*He remembereth that we are dust.*" Made of dust, dust still, and ready to return to dust. We have sometimes heard of "the Iron Duke," and of iron constitutions, but the words are soon belied, for the Iron Duke is dissolved, and other men of like vigour are following to the grave, where "dust to dust" is an appropriate requiem. We too often forget that we are dust,

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and try our minds and bodies unduly by excessive mental and bodily exertion, we are also too little mindful of the infirmities of others, and impose upon them burdens grievous to be borne; but our heavenly Father never overloads us, and never fails to give us strength equal to our day, because he always takes our frailty into account when he is apportioning to us our lot. Blessed be his holy name for this gentleness towards his frail creatures.

15. "*As for man, his days are as grass.*" He lives on the grass, and lives like the grass. Corn is but educated grass, and man, who feeds on it, partakes of its nature. The grass lives, grows, flowers, falls beneath the scythe, dries up, and is removed from the field: read this sentence over again, and you will find it the history of man. If he lives out his little day, he is cut down at last, and it is far more likely that he will wither before he comes to maturity, or be plucked away on a sudden, long before he has fulfilled his time. "*As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.*" He has a beauty and a comeliness even as the meadows have when they are yellow with the king-cups, but, alas, how short-lived! No sooner come than gone, a flash of loveliness and no more! Man is not even like a flower in the conservatory or in the sheltered garden border, he grows best according to nature, as the field-flower does, and like the unprotected beautifier of the pasture, he runs a thousand risks of coming to a speedy end. A large congregation, in many-coloured attire, always reminds us of a meadow bright with many hues; and the comparison becomes sadly true when we reflect, that as the grass and its goodliness soon pass away, even so will those we gaze upon, and all their visible beauty. Thus, too, must it be with all that comes of the flesh, even its greatest excellencies and natural virtues, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and therefore is but as grass which withers if but a breath of wind assails it. Happy are they who, born from above, have in them an incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever.

16. "*For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone.*" Only a little wind is needed, not even a scythe is demanded, a breath can do it, for the flower is so frail.

> "If one sharp wind sweep o'er the field,
> It withers in an hour."

How small a portion of deleterious gas suffices to create a deadly fever, which no art of man can stay. No need of sword or bullet, a puff of foul air is deadlier far, and fails not to lay low the healthiest and most stalwart son of man. "*And the place thereof shall know it no more.*" The flower blooms no more. It may have a successor, but as for itself its leaves are scattered, and its perfume will never again sweeten the evening air. Man also dies and is gone, gone from his old haunts, his dear home, and his daily labours, never to return. As far as this world is concerned, he is as though he ne'er had been; the sun rises, the moon increases or wanes, summer and winter run their round, the rivers flow, and all things continue in their courses as though they missed him not, so little a figure does he make in the affairs of nature. Perhaps a friend will note that he is gone, and say,

> "One morn, I miss'd him on the accustom'd hill,
> Along the heath, and near his favourite tree;
> Another came, nor yet beside the rill,
> Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he."

But when the "dirges due" are silent, beyond a mound of earth, and perhaps a crumbling stone, how small will be the memorial of our existence upon this busy scene! True there are more enduring memories, and an existence of another kind coeval with eternity, but these belong, not to our flesh, which is but grass, but to a higher life, in which we rise to close fellowship with the Eternal.

17. "*But the mercy of the* LORD *is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.*" Blessed *but!* How vast the contrast between the fading flower and the everlasting God! How wonderful that his mercy should link our

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frailty with his eternity, and make us everlasting too! From old eternity the Lord viewed his people as objects of mercy, and as such chose them to become partakers of his grace; the doctrine of eternal election is most delightful to those who have light to see it and love wherewith to accept it. It is a theme for deepest thought and highest joy. The "*to everlasting*" is equally precious. Jehovah changes not, he has mercy without end as well as without beginning. Never will those who fear him find that either their sins or their needs have exhausted the great deep of his grace. The main question is, "Do we *fear him?*" If we are lifting up to heaven the eye of filial fear, the gaze of paternal love is never removed from us, and it never will be, world without end. "*And his righteousness unto children's children.*" Mercy to those with whom the Lord makes a covenant is guaranteed by *righteousness;* it is because he is just that he never revokes a promise, or fails to fulfil it. Our believing sons and their seed for ever will find the word of the Lord the same: to them will he display his grace and bless them even as he has blessed us. Let us sing, then, for posterity. The past commands our praise and the future invites it. For our descendants let us sing as well as pray. If Abraham rejoiced concerning his seed, so also may the godly, for "instead of the fathers shall be the children," and as the last psalm told us in its concluding verse, "the children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee."

18. Children of the righteous are not, however, promised the Lord's mercy without stipulation, and this verse completes the statement of the last by adding: "*To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.*" The parents must be obedient and the children too. We are here bidden to abide by the covenant, and those who run off to any other confidence than the finished work of Jesus are not among those who obey this precept; those with whom the covenant is really made stand firm to it, and having begun in the Spirit, they do not seek to be made perfect in the flesh. The truly godly keep the Lord's commands carefully—they "*remember*"; they observe them practically—"*to do them*": moreover they do not pick and choose, but remember "*his commandments*" as such, without exalting one above another as their own pleasure or convenience may dictate. May our offspring be a thoughtful, careful, observant race, eager to know the will of the Lord, and prompt to follow it fully, then will his mercy enrich and honour them from generation to generation.

This verse also suggests praise, for who would wish the Lord to smile on those who will not regard his ways? That were to encourage vice. From the manner in which some men unguardedly preach the covenant, one might infer that God would bless a certain set of men however they might live, and however they might neglect his laws. But the word teaches not so. The covenant is not legal, but it is holy. It is all of grace from first to last, yet it is no panderer to sin; on the contrary, one of its greatest promises is, "I will put my laws in their hearts and in their minds will I write them"; its general aim is the sanctifying of a people unto God, zealous for good works, and all its gifts and operations work in that direction. Faith keeps the covenant by looking alone to Jesus, while at the same time by earnest obedience it remembers the Lord's commandments to do them.

19. "*The* LORD *has prepared his throne in the heavens.*" Here is a grand burst of song produced by a view of the boundless power, and glorious sovereignty of Jehovah. His throne is *fixed*, for that is the word; it is established, settled, immovable.

> "He sits on no precarious throne,
> Nor borrows leave to be."

About his government there is no alarm, no disorder, no perturbation, no hurrying to and fro in expedients, no surprises to be met or unexpected catastrophes to be warded off;—all is prepared and fixed, and he himself has prepared and fixed it. He is no delegated sovereign for whom a throne is set up by another; he is an autocrat, and his dominion arises from himself

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and is sustained by his own innate power. This matchless sovereignty is the pledge of our security, the pillar upon which our confidence may safely lean.

"*And his kingdom ruleth over all.*" Over the whole universe he stretches his sceptre. He now reigns universally, he always has done so, and he always will. To us the world may seem rent with anarchy, but he brings order out of confusion. The warring elements are marching beneath his banner when they most wildly rush onward in furious tempest. Great and small, intelligent and material, willing and unwilling, fierce or gentle,—all, all are under his sway. His is the only universal monarchy, he is the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords. A clear view of his ever active, and everywhere supreme providence, is one of the most delightful of spiritual gifts; he who has it cannot do otherwise than bless the Lord with all his soul.

Thus has the sweet singer hymned the varied attributes of the Lord as seen in nature, grace, and providence, and now he gathers up all his energies for one final outburst of adoration, in which he would have all unite, since all are subjects of the Great King.

20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

21 Bless ye the LORD, all *ye* his hosts; *ye* ministers of his, that do his pleasure.

22 Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.

20. "*Bless the* LORD, *ye his angels, that excel in strength.*" Finding his work of praise growing upon his hands, he calls upon "the firstborn sons of light" to speak the praises of the Lord, as well they may, for as Milton says, they best can tell. Dwelling nearer to that prepared throne than we as yet have leave to climb, they see in nearer vision the glory which we would adore. To them is given an exceeding might of intellect, and voice, and force which they delight to use in sacred services for him; let them now turn all their strength into that solemn song which we would send up to the third heaven. To him who gave angelic strength let all angelic strength be given. They are *his* angels, and therefore they are not loath to ring out his praises. "*That do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.*" We are bidden to do these commandments, and alas we fail; let those unfallen spirits, whose bliss it is never to have transgressed, give to the Lord the glory of their holiness. They hearken for yet more commands, obeying as much by reverent listening as by energetic action, and in this they teach us how the heavenly will should evermore be done; yet even for this surpassing excellence let them take no praise, but render all to him who has made and kept them what they are. O that we could hear them chant the high praises of God, as did the shepherds on that greatest of all birth nights—

> "When such music sweet
> Their hearts and ears did greet
> As never was by mortal finger struck;
> Divinely-warbled voice
> Answering the stringèd noise,
> As well their souls in blissful rapture took:
> The air, such pleasure loth to lose,
> With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close."

Our glad heart anticipates the hour when we shall hear them "harping in loud and solemn guise," and all to the sole praise of God.

21. "*Bless ye the* LORD, *all ye his hosts;*" to whatever race of creatures ye may belong, for ye are all his troops, and he is the Generallissimo of all your armies. The fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea, should all unite in praising their Creator, after the

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best of their ability. "*Ye ministers of his that do his pleasure*"; in whatever way ye serve him, bless him as ye serve. The psalmist would have every servant in the Lord's palace unite with him, and all at once sing out the praises of the Lord. We have attached a new sense to the word "ministers" in these latter days, and so narrowed it down to those who serve in word and doctrine. Yet no true minister would wish to alter it, for we are above all men bound to be the Lord's servants, and we would, beyond all other ministering intelligences or forces, desire to bless the glorious Lord.

22. "*Bless the* LORD, *all his works in all places of his dominion.*" Here is a trinity of blessing for the thrice blessed God, and each one of the three blessings is an enlargement upon that which went before. This is the most comprehensive of all, for what can be a wider call than to all in all places? See how finite man can awaken unbounded praise! Man is but little, yet, placing his hands upon the keys of the great organ of the universe, he wakes it to thunders of adoration! Redeemed man is the voice of nature, the priest in the temple of creation, the precentor in the worship of the universe. O that all the Lord's works on earth were delivered from the vanity to which they were made subject, and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God: the time is hastening on and will most surely come; then will all the Lord's works bless him indeed. The immutable promise is ripening, the sure mercy is on its way. Hasten, ye winged hours!

"*Bless the* LORD, *O my soul.*" He closes on his key-note. He cannot be content to call on others without taking his own part; nor because others sing more loudly and perfectly, will he be content to be set aside. O my soul, come home to thyself and to thy God, and let the little world within thee keep time and tune to the spheres which are ringing out Jehovah's praise. O infinitely blessed Lord, favour us with this highest blessing of being for ever and ever wholly engrossed in blessing Thee.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINT SAYINGS.

Title.—A Psalm of David, which he wrote when carried out of himself as far as heaven, saith Beza.—*John Trapp.*

Whole Psalm.—How often have saints in Scotland sung this psalm in days when they celebrated the *Lord's Supper!* It is thereby specially known in our land. It is connected also with a remarkable case in the days of John Knox. Elizabeth Adamson, a woman who attended on his preaching, "because he more fully opened the fountain of God's mercies than others did," was led to Christ and to rest, on hearing this psalm, after enduring such agony of soul that she said, concerning racking pains of body, "A thousand years of this torment, and ten times more joined, are not to be compared to a quarter of an hour of my soul's trouble. She asked for this psalm again before departing: "It was in receiving it that my troubled soul first tasted God's mercy, which is now sweeter to me than if all the kingdoms of the earth were given me to possess."—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Whole Psalm.—The number of verses in this psalm is that of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet; and the completeness of the whole is further testified by its return at the close to the words with which it started, "Bless the LORD, O my soul."—*J. F. Thrupp.*

Whole Psalm.—The Psalm, in regard to number, is an alphabetical one, harmonized in such a way as that the concluding turns back into the introductory verse, the whole being in this manner finished and rounded off. In like manner, the name Jehovah occurs eleven times. The psalm is divided into two strophes, the first of ten and the second of twelve verses. The ten is

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divided by the five, and the twelve falls into three divisions, each of four verses. Jehovah occurs in the first strophe four, and in the second seven times.

The psalm bears the character of quiet tenderness. It is a still clear brook of the praise of God. In accordance with this, we find that the verses are of equal length as to structure, and consist regularly of two members. It is only at the conclusion, where the tone rises, that the verses become longer: the vessel is too small for the feeling.

The testimony which the *title* bears on behalf of the composition of the psalm by David, is confirmed by the fact that the psalm in passages, the independence of which cannot be mistaken, bears a striking resemblance to the other psalms of David, and by the connection with Psalm cii. David here teaches his posterity to *render thanks*, as in the previous psalm he had taught them to *pray*: the deliverance from deep distress which formed there the subject of prayer, forms here the subject of thanks.—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Whole Psalm.—It is observable that no petition occurs throughout the entire compass of these twenty-two verses. Not a single word of supplication is in the whole psalm addressed to the Most High. Prayer, fervent, heartfelt prayer, had doubtless been previously offered on the part of the psalmist, and answered by his God. Innumerable blessings had been showered down from above in acknowledgment of David's supplications; and, therefore, an overflowing gratitude now bursts forth from their joyful recipient. He touches every chord of his harp and of his heart together, and pours forth a spontaneous melody of sweetest sound and purest praise.—*John Stevenson, in "Gratitude: an Exposition of the Hundred and Third Psalm,"* 1856.

Verse 1.—"*Bless the* LORD, *O my soul.*" O how well they are fitted! for what work so fit for my soul as this? Who so fit for this work as my soul? My body, God knows, is gross and heavy, and very unfit for so sublime a work. No, my soul, it is thou must do it; and indeed what hast thou else to do? it is the very work for which thou were made, and O that thou wert as fit to do the work as the work is fit for thee to do! But, alas, thou art become in a manner earthy, at least hast lost a great part of thy abilities, and will never be able to go through with this great work thyself alone. If to bless the Lord were no more but to say, Lord, Lord, like to them that cried, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord;" then my tongue alone would be sufficient for it, and I should not need to trouble any other about it; but to bless the Lord is an eminent work, and requires not only many but very able agents to perform it; and therefore, my soul, when thou goest about it, go not alone; but, take with thee "*all that is within thee;*" all the forces in my whole magazine, whether it be my heart, or my spirits; whether my will, or my affections; whether my understanding, or my memory; take them all with thee, and bless the Lord.—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 1.—"*All that is within me.*" The literal translation of the form here used is *my insides* or *inner parts*, the strong and comprehensive meaning of the plural being further enhanced by the addition of *all*, as if to preclude exception and reserve, and comprehend within the scope of the address all the powers and affections.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 1.—"*All that is within me,*" etc. Let your *conscience* "bless the Lord," by unvarying fidelity. Let your *judgment* bless Him, by decisions in accordance with his word. Let your *imagination* bless him, by pure and holy musings. Let your *affections* praise him, by loving whatsoever he loves. Let your *desires* bless him, by seeking only his glory. Let your *memory* bless him, by not forgetting any of his benefits. Let your *thoughts* bless him, by meditating on his excellencies. Let your *hope* praise him, by longing and looking for the glory that is to be revealed. Let your every *sense* bless him by its fealty, your every *word* by its truth, and your every *act* by its integrity.—*John Stevenson.*

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Verse 1.—"*Bless the* LORD, *O my soul.*" You have often heard, that when God is said to bless men, and they on the other hand are excited to bless him, the word is taken in two very different senses. God is the only fountain of being and happiness, from which all good ever flows; and hence he is said to bless his creatures when he bestows mercies and favours upon them, gives them any endowments of body and mind, delivers them from evils, and is the source of their present comforts and future hopes. But in this sense, you'll see there is no possibility of any creature's blessing God; for as his infinite and unblemished perfection renders him incapable of receiving any higher excellency, or improvement in happiness; so, could we put the supposition that this immense ocean of good might be increased, it is plain that we, who receive our very being and everything that we have or are from him, could in no case contribute thereto. To *bless God*, then, is, with an ardent affection humbly to acknowledge those divine excellencies, which render him the best and greatest of beings, the only object worthy of the highest adoration: it is to give him the praise of all those glorious attributes which adorn his nature, and are so conspicuously manifested in his works and ways. To bless God, is to embrace every proper opportunity of owning our veneration and esteem of his excellent greatness, and to declare to all about us, as loudly as we can, the goodness and grace of his conduct towards men, and our infinite obligations for all our enjoyments to him, *in whom we live, move, and have our being.* And a right *blessing of God* must take its rise from a heart that is full of esteem and gratitude, which puts life into the songs of praise.

And then, of all others, the most lively and acceptable method of blessing God, is a holy conversation and earnest endeavor to be purified from all iniquity; for blessing of God consists, as I told you, in adoring his excellencies, and expressing our esteem and veneration of them: but what can be so effectual a way of doing this, as the influence that the views of them have upon our lives? That person best exalts the glory of the divine power, who fears God above all, and trembles at the apprehensions of his wrath; and of his justice, who flees from sin, which exposes him to the inexorable severity thereof; and of his love, who is softened thereby into grateful returns of obedience; and then we celebrate his holiness, when we endeavour to imitate it in our lives, and abandon everything that is an abomination to the eyes of his purity.—*William Dunlop*, 1692—1720.

Verse 1.—"*O my soul.*" God's eye is chiefly upon the soul: bring a hundred dishes to table, he will carve of none but this; this is the savoury meat he loves. He who is best, will be served with the best; when we give him the soul in a duty, then we give him the flower and the cream; by a holy chemistry we still out the spirits. A soul inflamed in service is the cup of "spiced wine of the juice of the pomegranate" (Cant. viii. 2) which the spouse makes Christ to drink of.—*Thomas Watson.*

Verse 1.—"*Bless his holy name.*" The *name* of God frequently signifies his nature and attributes, in Scripture. Now, *holiness* is the glory of this name; the purity of God is that which beautifies all his perfections, and renders them worthy to be praised. His eternity, and knowledge, and power, without justice, and goodness, and truth, might indeed frighten and confound us; but could not inflame our love, or engage us to hearty blessing. But when infinite mightiness, and unerring wisdom, and eternal dominion, are mixed with unchangeable love, and inviolable veracity and goodness, which exalts itself above all his works; when thus it becomes a *holy name*, then the divine perfections are rendered truly amiable, and suitable objects of our hope and confidence and loudest songs; so that you see how elegantly the psalmist upon this occasion mentions the purity of God: "*Bless his holy name.*"

And besides this, there is indeed nothing that more exalts the glory of divine grace and of redeeming love towards a soul, than the consideration of *God's holiness;* for if your Maker were not *of purer eyes than man is*, yea, if his hatred to sin, and love to righteousness, were not greater than that of

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the noblest angel, his pardoning of sin, and patience towards transgressors would not be such a wonderful condescension; but is his name infinitely holy so that "*the heavens are not clean in his sight*"? Is the smallest iniquity the abhorrence of his soul, and what he hates with a perfect hatred? Surely, then, his grace and love must be incomparably greater than our thoughts.—*William Dunlop.*

Verses 1, 2.—The well is seldom so full that water will at first pumping flow forth; neither is the heart commonly so spiritual, after our best care in our worldly converse (much less when we somewhat overdo therein) as to pour itself into God's bosom freely, without something to raise and elevate it; yea, often, the springs of grace lie so low, that pumping only will not fetch the heart up to a praying frame, but arguments must be poured into the soul before the affections rise. Hence are those soliloquies and discourses which we find holy men use with their own hearts to bring them into a gracious temper, suitable for communion with God in ordinances. It seems [by these verses] David either found or feared his heart would not be in so good a frame as he desired; consequently he redoubles his charge: he found his heart somewhat drowsy, which made him thus rouse himself.—*William Gurnall.*

Verses 1—3.—The psalmist's gratitude here has four attributes. The first is *personal.* "Bless the Lord, *my soul.*" He has the self-same application in the close of the psalm, after he has called on others to do this work. Our religion must be social as well as personal: but while it must not end at home, it must begin at home; and relative religion, without personal, will always be found wanting in excitement, in energy, in extent, in continuance, and very commonly in success. Secondly, it is *fervent.* "*And all that is within me, bless his holy name*"—all my thoughts, my feelings, my understanding, my will, my memory, my conscience, my affections, my passions.

> "If there be passions in my soul,
> (And passions, Lord, there be);
> Let them be all at thy control,
> My gracious Lord, for thee."

Thirdly, it is *rational*, and demanded by the facts of his past life. Therefore "forget not all his benefits." Nothing can properly affect or influence us when it is out of our recollection. "Out of sight out of mind;" and out of mind, out of motive. Whence arose the ingratitude of the Jews of old? Bad memories. "Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten the God that formed thee." "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." It should therefore be your concern, not only to recall your mercies, but to reckon them. Lastly, it is *specific:* "*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.*" When all the words in a discourse are emphatic, nothing is emphatic, when we dwell on everything, we dwell on nothing effectively. We are more struck, in a landscape, with a selected point of vision for inspection, than by the general prospect. David was a poet, and understood poetry well; and poetry differs from philosophy. The one seeks to rise from particular facts and instances, to establish general principles and rules: the other is always for descending from generalization to particularization; and much of its beauty and force arises from individualities.—*William Jay*, 1849.

Verse 2.—"*Bless the* LORD, *O my soul.*" David found some dulness and drowsiness; hence he so often puts the thorn to his breast; hence he so impetuously instigateth his soul, as one here phraseth it.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—"*Forget not.*" This touches the secret spring of so much ingratitude—forgetfulness, the want of re-collection, or gathering together again of all the varied threads of mercy. Compare Deut. vi. 12; viii. 11, 14. "*Si oblivisceris, tacebis*" (If thou forgettest, thou wilt be silent).—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

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Verse 2.—"*Forget not all his benefits.*" That is, forget not any of his benefits, as the form of speech in the original doth import.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 2.—"*Benefits.*" The word rendered "benefits"—גמול *gemul*, means properly an act, work, doing, whether good or evil, Ps. cxxxvii. 8; and then, *desert*, or what a man deserves *for* his act; *recompense*. It is rendered *deserving* in Judges ix. 16; *benefit*, as here, in 2 Chron. xxxii. 25; *desert*, Ps. xxviii. 4; *reward*, Ps. xciv. 2; Isai. iii. 11; Obad. 15; *recompense*, Prov. xii. 14; Isai. xxxv. 4; lix. 18; lxvi. 6; Jer. li. 6; Lam. iii. 64; Joel iii. 4, 7. The proper reference here is to the Divine *dealings*, to what God had *done*, as a reason for blessing his name. His *dealings* with the psalmist had been such as to call for praise and gratitude. What those *dealings* particularly were he specifies in the following verses.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 3.—"*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.*" Thine iniquities are more than can be numbered; and they are an intolerable burden, so that thy soul under them "can in no wise lift up herself." He forgiveth them *all*. He relieveth thee of *all*. He taketh the dreadful burden from thy back, the galling yoke from thy neck, and makes thee free. . . . . Thine iniquities are in-equities. There is nothing just or right in thee. Thy very nature is an in-equity, bringing forth nothing but in-equities. In-equities towards thy God, in-equities towards thy neighbour, and in-equities towards thyself, make up the whole of thy life. Thou art a bad tree, and a bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit.—*John Pulsford, in* "*Quiet Hours,*" 1857.

Verse 3.—"*All thine iniquities.*" In this lovely and well-known psalm, we have great fulness of expression, in reference to the vital subject of redemption. "Who forgiveth *all* thine iniquities." It is not "*some*" or "*many* of thine iniquities." This would never do. If so much as the very smallest iniquity, in thought, word, or act, were left unforgiven, we should be just as badly off, just as far from God, just as unfit for heaven, just as exposed to hell, as though the whole weight of our sins were yet upon us. Let the reador ponder this deeply. It does not say, "Who forgiveth thine iniquities previous to conversion." There is no such notion as this in Scripture. When God forgives, he forgives like himself. The source, the channel, the power, and the standard of forgiveness are all divine. When God cancels a man's sins, he does so according to the measure in which Christ bore those sins. Now, Christ not only bore *some* or *many* of the believer's sins, he bore them "all," aud, therefore, God forgives "*all.*" God's forgiveness stretches to the length of Christ's atonement; and Christ's atonement stretches to the length of every one of the believer's sins, past, present, and future. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from *all* sin." 1 John i.—"*Things New and Old,*" 1858.

Verse 3.—"*Who healeth all thy diseases.*" In one of the prisons of a certain country, was a man who had committed high treason: for this crime he was in due time tried, and, being found guilty, was condemned to die. But more than this; he was afflicted with an inward disease, which generally proves mortal. Now we may truly say, that this man is *doubly* dead; that his life is forfeited twice over: the laws of his country have pronounced him guilty of death, and therefore his life is forfeited *once* to the laws of his country, and, if he had not died in *this* way, he must die of his disease; he is, therefore, "twice dead." Now suppose that the sovereign of that country had made up his mind to wish to save that prisoner's life, *could* he save it? He could indeed take off the penalty of the law; he could give him a free pardon, and so restore the life, as sure as it is forfeited by the just sentence of the law; but, unless he could also send a physician, who could cure the man of his disease, he would die by *that*, and his pardon would only lengthen out for a few weeks or months a miserable existence. And if this disease were not only a mortal disease, but an *infectious* one, likely to spread itself by the *breath* of the patient, and a *contagious* one, likely to spread by the *touch* of the patient's body or clothes,

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then it would be dangerous to others to come near that man; and unless he were cured, and thoroughly and entirely cured, the man, though pardoned, would still be a fit inmate only for the pest-house, and could not be received into the houses of the healthy. You have *seen* such a case as this, brethren; you are at this very moment, perhaps, sitting close by a person in this case; yes, and perhaps you are in this very case yourself! *Perhaps*, do I say? I should say, you ARE in this very case, unless you are really and truly a Christian, a believer in Christ Jesus.—*W. Weldon Champneys*, 1842.

Verse 3.—"*All thy diseases.*" The body experienceth the melancholy consequences of Adam's offence, and is subject to many infirmities; but the soul is subject to as many. What is pride, but lunacy; what is anger, but a fever; what is avarice, but a dropsy; what is lust, but a leprosy; what is sloth, but a dead palsy? Perhaps there are spiritual maladies similar to all corporeal ones.—*George Horne.*

Verse 3.—"*All thy diseases.*" O my soul, consider the multitude of infirmities, to which thou art subject; thou hast many suggestions of the flesh; and thou art apt to yield unto them, and strivest not against them by earnest prayer and holy meditations; this is an infirmity. In thy prayers to God, thy thoughts are often wandering, and thou thinkest of other matters, far unworthy of that great Majesty to whom thou prayest: or if not so, yet thou art quickly weary, thy spirits are drowsy in it, and thou hadst rather be doing of something else; this is an infirmity. And indeed thou hast infirmities in all thy senses. In thy seeing, thou canst see a mote in thy brother's eye, and canst not see a beam in thine own eye. In thy smelling, thou thinkest *suavis odor lucri ex re qualibet*, that the savour of gain is sweet, from whence soever it rise. In thy hearing, thou art gladder to hear the profane and idle discourses, than such as be serious and holy; these are thy infirmities: and, O my soul, if I should cut thee up into as many parts as an anatomist, and examine the infirmities of every part, should I not have cause, just cause, to cry out with Saint Paul, O wretch that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin? Who shall heal me of all these infirmities? for whether we call them sins, and then God forgives them; or call them infirmities, and then he heals them; they are to us, all one benefit; in God, all one kindness; that as either of them is well worth remembering; so for both of them, we have just cause to bless him and to praise his name.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 3.—"*All thy diseases.*" Our *understandings* are so bad that they understand not their own badness; our *wills*, which are the queens of our souls, become the vassals of sin; our *memory*, like jet, good only to draw straws and treasure up trifles of no moment; our *consciences*, through errors in our own understanding, sometimes accusing us when we are innocent, sometimes acquitting us when we are guilty; our *affections* all disaffected and out of order. Must not that needs be a monstrous face, wherein the blueness which should be in the veins is in the lips, the redness which should be in the cheeks, in the nose; the hair that should grow on the head, on the face? and must not our souls needs seem ugly in the sight of God, who have grief growing there where joy should, and joy where grief should? We love what we should hate and hate where we should love; we fear where no fear is, and fear not where we ought to fear; and all our affections either mistake their object, or exceed their due measure.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 4.—"*Who redeemeth thy life from destruction.*" From his earliest days the psalmist was the child of Providence. Many were the hairbreadth escapes and the wonderful deliverances, which he experienced. Dangers of various kinds presented themselves as his years advanced. The jaw of the lion, and the paw of the bear, at various times threatened to terminate his existence, and at others the ruthless hand of man. The same God who delivered him from the sword of Goliath, rescued his life from the javelin of Saul. The Almighty Friend who had covered his head in the day of battle, delivered him, at

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one moment, from the lords of the Philistines, saved him at another out of the hands of the men of Keilah; and again preserved to him his life and throne from the unnatural rebellion of his own son. Well, therefore, might the psalmist stir up his soul, and all that was within him, to bless the Lord with most fervent gratitude, who, by so many signal deliverances, had "*redeemed his life from destruction.*"—*John Stevenson.*

Verse 4.—"*Who redeemeth.*" Preservation from destruction, הגואל *haggoel*, properly, *redemption of life by the kinsman;* possibly looking forward, in the spirit of prophecy, to him who became partaker of our flesh and blood, that he might have the right to redeem our souls from death by dying in our stead.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 4.—"*From the pit,*" including death, the grave, Hades. The Targum renders "from Gehenna."—*J. J. S. Perowne.*

Verse 4.—"*Tender mercies.*" I do not know that I can do better than tell you a little incident that took place in my native town of Stirling. Workmen were blasting the castle rock, near where it abuts upon a walk that lies open to the street. The train was laid and lit, and an explosion was momentarily expected. Suddenly trotting round the great wall of the cliff, came a little child going straight to where the match burned. The men shouted—(it was *mercy*)—and by their very terror in shouting, alarmed and bewildered the poor little thing. By this time the mother also had come round: in a moment saw the danger; opened wide her arms, and cried from her very heart, "*Come to me, my darling,*"—(that was *tender* mercy)—and instantly, with eager pattering feet, and little arms opened to her arms, and tear-filled eyes answering to her eyes—the little thing ran back and away, and stopped not until she was clasped in her mother's bosom—wealth of sunny hair loosened on it, and lips coral red pressed to mother's pallid lip of fear—as the motherly heart gave way to tears, in the thought of so imperilled an escape: for it was barely by a second, as the roar of the shattered rock told.—*Alexander B. Grosart, in "The Pastor and Helper of Joy,"* 1865.

Verse 5.—"*Who satisfieth thy mouth.*" The word rendered "*mouth,*" is עדיך, which is rendered *ornaments* in our version in all other passages—eleven in number—where it occurs, except here and in xxxii. 9, where it is rendered "*mouth;*" and even there it ought properly be translated *ornament*, and here the sense seems to be *thy ornament*, that which is thy glory, thy spirit, xvi. 9; lxii. 8. It is true that the soul נפשי is here addressed (see v. 1); but the spirit may be called the *ornament* or *glory* of the *soul.* — *Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 5.—"*Satisfieth thy mouth.*" Kimchi understands the phrase as expressing David's recovery from sickness. In sickness the soul abhorreth bread, and even dainty meat, Job xxxiii. 20. The physician, too, limits the diet of the patient, and prescribes things which are nauseous to the palate. The commentator, therefore, supposes that David here describes the blessing of health, by *his mouth being filled with good things.*—*Editorial Note to Calvin in loc.*

Verse 5.—"*Satisfieth.*" God can so satisfy the soul, that each chink and cranny therein shall be filled with spiritual joy.—*Thomas Fuller.*

Verse 5.—"*With good things.*" Mark, what does the Lord satisfy with?—"*good* things." Not *rich* things, not *many* things, not *everything* I ask for, but "*good* things." All my *need* fully supplied, and everything "*good.*" Goodness is God expressed. All his blessings partake of his own nature. They are holy blessings, holy mercies. Everything that *satisfies* must have the nature of God in it. Nothing else will ever "satisfy." The heart was made for God, and only God can meet it.—*Frederick Whitfield,* 1874.

Verse 5.—"*Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*" It is an ancient fable that the eagle is able to renew his youth when very old, and poetical allusion is made to it in this psalm; but this idea is doubtless founded in reality on the great longevity of the bird, and its power, in common with other birds, of

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moulting its plumage periodically, and so increasing its strength and activity.—*Hugh Macmillan.**

Verse. 5.—"*Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*"—The Scripture knows nothing of the idea that the eagle when old renews its youth. That there is nothing of this kind contained in Is. xl. 31, which is commonly appealed to, but that it is rather the powerful flight of the eagle that is there referred to, "they mount up on wings like the eagle, they run and are not weary," is evident from the parallel, to *fly, run, march.*—*E. W. Hengstenberg.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*" *Thy activity will renew itself like the eagle.* That is to say, From day to day he will receive and increase his strength and vigour, so that he may thrive and flourish like the eagle. The comparison with the eagle is not drawn in point of *renovation*, but in point of vigour and *activity* continually renewing itself; as Is. xl. 31, says, "*They that wait upon the* LORD *shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles.*"—*Venema.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*"—This renovation of his youth may be understood three ways. First, as to his natural state, or bodily strength. Secondly, as to his civil state, or worldly successes, as to his honour and kingly renown. Thirdly, as to his spiritual state, or the heightening of his gifts, graces, and comforts. 'Tis probable David had found a declension in all these, and at last, through the goodness of God and his blessing upon him, the renewing of them all from that oldness to a youthfulness again, like that of eagles.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5.—"*Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*"—However bold it may sound, we say not too much when we speak of an *eternal youth*, as the glorious privilege of the devout servant of the Lord, but of him alone. All that with reason charms and captivates in the appearance of youth, is seen in heightened measure where the spiritual life develops itself undisturbed in fellowship with God. Does the *innocence* of youth attract you? In the natural life it is but too frequently a misleading appearance; but in the life of the soul it returns to a certain extent when the heart is purified through the power of the Holy Ghost, and the life is renewed in conformity with that of Christ the Lord. Does the *enjoyment* of youth surpass in your estimation that of any other here below? Be it so; yet all too speedily it is driven away by the cares of later years, whilst enjoyment free from care even in the dark days may dwell in the heart whereon has descended the peace of God through faith. The *strength* of youth, seems it to you desirable? Ah! day by day stamps truth upon the words: "Youth shall faint and be weary;" but even when the natural strength has already long attained its zenith, the Christian often feels himself elevated through a power from on high, which lifts him above physical weakness; and what no strength of sinew or muscle could accomplish is attained through the power of implicit faith. Yea, even the beautiful *development* which the period of youth shows you, ye would not seek in vain in that man who, leaning on God's hand, forgetting the things that are behind, stretches forward from light to light, from strength to strength, from bliss to bliss. How, finally, can *hope*, that makes the youthful heart beat high with throbs of joy, be lacking to him? The fairest part of life the sensual man sees soon behind him, the spiritual man always in prospect; and like the eagle, this last can often from the low atmosphere round him soar to the pure, clear ether, whence already from afar the image, nay, the ineffable reality, shows him a more than earthly joy.

Eternal youth: it may, yet much more than for David, now be the portion of every Christian, but for these alone. Without faith and hope in the heart, even the bravest determination to remain young always, or at least as long as possible, must give away before the first great storm of life. Yet even when

* We might have filled much of our space with the fables from the rabbis and the fathers in reference to eagles; but they are too absurd, and ought never to be repeated. We hope, therefore, that the reader will excuse if not commend the omission.

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faith and hope are not strangers to us, whence is it that in our spiritual life there is frequently so little of the "*eagle*" spoken of here, and so much of the "sparrow alone upon the housetop," referred to in Psalm cii. 7? Can it be that we allow ourselves too little to be satisfied with the good things of which David had spoken immediately before; that is to say, that we *live* so little on the best things which God has to bestow,—his word, his Spirit, his grace? Only through these do we attain that lasting second birth, of which the eagle is the emblem, and an unfading youth of heart the inestimable fruit. Ye who are young in years, seek this undying youth above all the joys of early life! Recover it, ye middle-aged, in living fellowship with him who maketh all things new within! Preserve it, old friends of God and of his Christ, as your fairest crown here on earth, and the earnest of your bliss in heaven. And thou, Christian, who sittest down disconsolate, bethink thyself; the eagle lets his wings hang down, only thereafter to soar with stronger flight!—*J. J. Van Oosterzee, in "The Year of Salvation,"* 1874.

Verse 6.—"*The* LORD *executeth righteousness,*" &c. Rising from personal blessings to general, the comprehensive fact, evermore to the glory of God, is his sympathy with the suffering and oppressed, and his ready and effective interposition in their case. Who will not praise him that he careth so kindly and so gloriously for those who suffer cruel wrongs from wicked oppressors?—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 7.—"*He made known his ways unto Moses.*" When Moses went up to Mount Sinai and tarried there with God the space of forty days, we may well think that God in that time, revealed many secrets to him; and particularly "*made known his ways;*" (Ex. xxxiii. 19); not only his ways in which he would have us to walk, but his ways in which he walks himself, and the course he holds in the government of worldly affairs; why he suffers the wicked to prosper, and why the godly to be oppressed. These "*ways*" of his he made known to Moses; to the children of Israel, only "his acts." He showed them his wonderful favours to themselves in the wilderness, and that was his righteousness; but he showed them not his ways, and the course he held in them: they saw only the events of things, they saw not the reasons of them, as Moses did.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 8—"*Merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.*" O my soul, here are four properties spoken of to be in God, and are all so necessary, that we could not miss one of them. If he were not "*merciful*" we could hope for no pardon; and if he were no more but merciful we could hope for no more but pardon; but when besides his being merciful he is also "*gracious,*" this gives us a further hope, a hope of a donative; and then it will not be what we are worthy to receive, but what it is fit for him to give. If he were not "*slow to anger*" we could expect no patience; but when besides his slowness to anger he is also "*full of compassion;*" this makes us expect he will be the good Samaritan, and not only bind up our wounds, but take care also for our further curing. What though he chide and be angry for a time; it is but our being patient a while with him, as he a long time hath been patient with us.—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 8—"*Slow to anger.*" In Scripture we find that slowness to anger, and hastiness to be angry, are expressed by the different frame of the nostrils; as, namely, when the Lord is said to be "*slow to anger,*" the Hebrew is, *long of nostrils.*—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 8.—"*Plenteous in mercy.*" וְרַב־חֶסֶד, "great, mighty in mercy," placing his chief glory in this attribute, and hereby teaching us how to estimate true greatness.—*George Horne.*

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Verse 8.—"*Plenteous in mercy.*" It is a thing marvellously satisfactory and pleasing to the heart of a man to be still taking from a great heap; and upon this ground are those proverbial sayings, There is no fishing like to fishing in the sea, no service like the service of a king: because in one there is the greatest plenty and abundance of that kind of pleasure that fishers look after; and for them that serve, and must live by their service, there is none like that of princes, because they have abundance of reward and of opportunity whereby to recompense the services of those that do wait and attend upon them. . . . . And upon the same ground it is that the Scriptures, in several places do not only assert and testify that God is "*merciful*" and "*gracious*," but abundant in mercy and full of grace; and not simply that there is redemption in him, but plenteousness of redemption, Ps. lxxxvi. 5; and cxxx. 7; Isai. lv. 7, "Let the wicked forsake his way," etc.; "Let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." The commodity which we stand in need of is mercy and the pardon of our sins, because we have been unholy and ungodly creatures; this commodity is abundantly in God. There it is treasured up as waters are in the store-house of the sea; there is no end of the treasures of his grace, mercy, pardon, and compassion. There is no man, being in want, but had rather go to a rich man's door to be relieved, than to the door of a poor man, if he knoweth the rich man to be as liberal and as bountifully disposed as the poor man can be.—*John Goodwin, on "Being filled with the Spirit."*

Verse 9.—"*He will not always chide.*"—Certainly it is as unpleasing to God to chide, as it is to us to be chidden; and so little he likes of anger, that he rids his hands of it as fast as he can: he is not so slow in coming to it, but he is as quick in getting from it; for chiding is a bar to mercy, and anger an impediment to compassion; nothing is so distasteful to God as that any block should lie in the way of his mercy, or that the liberty of his compassion should have any cause of restraint: and then we may be sure he will not himself lay a block in the way with chiding, nor be a cause to restrain his compassion by keeping his anger.—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 9. (*Second Clause*).—*To keep anger for ever*, corresponds with the French phrase, *Je lui garde, Il me l'a gardé*,* which we use when the man, who cannot forgive the injuries he has received, cherishes secret revenge in his heart, and waits for an opportunity of retaliation. Now David denies that God, after the manner of men, keeps anger on account of injuries done to him, since he condescends to be reconciled.—*Calvin.*

Verse 10.—"*He hath not dealt with us after our sins.*" Might we not have expected, with such conduct, that God would have withdrawn from us the blessing of his providence, withheld from us the communication of his Spirit, permitted us to find the means of grace profitless, left our temptations to multiply, and suffered us to sink into a state of fixed backsliding?—and then, with our hearts at last sinking into too natural depression, might we not have seemed to hear him saying to us this day, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know, therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of Hosts."—*Baptist W. Noel*, 1798—1873.

Verse 10.—"*He hath not dealt with us after our sins.*" Why is it that God hath not dealt with us after our sins? Is it not because he hath dealt with another after our sins? Another who took our sins upon him; of whom it is said, that "God chastened him in his fierce wrath"? and why did he chasten him, but for our sins? O gracious God, thou art too just to take revenge twice for the same faults; and therefore, having turned thy fierce wrath upon

* "I am watching him, as he has watched to do a bad turn to me."

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him, thou wilt not turn it upon us too; but having rewarded him according to our iniquities, thou wilt now reward us according to his merits.—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 11.—Our mind cannot find a comparison too large for expressing the superabundant mercy of the Lord toward his people.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 12.—"*As far as the east is from the west.*" The expression taken from the distance of the *east from west* is pitched upon, saith Kimchi, because those two quarters of the world are of greatest extent, being all known and inhabited. From whence it is that geographies reckon that way their longitudes, as from north to south their latitudes.—*Henry Hammond.*

Verse 12.—When sin is pardoned, it is never charged again; the guilt of it can no more return than east can become west, or west become east.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 13.—*Like as a father pitieth his children,*" etc. A chaplain to seamen, at an American port, visited a sailor who appeared to be near death. He spoke kindly to the man upon the state of his soul, and directed him to cast himself on Jesus. With an oath, the sick man bade him begone. The chaplain then told him that he must be faithful to him, for if he died impenitent he would be lost for ever. The man was sullen and silent, and pretended to fall asleep. The visit was repeated more than once, with similar ill success. At length the chaplain, suspecting that the sailor was a Scotchman, repeated a verse of the old version of the Psalms:

> "Such pity as a father hath
> Unto his children dear,
> Like pity shows the Lord to such
> As worship him in fear."

Tears started into the sailor's eyes as he listened to these words. The chaplain asked him if he had not had a pious mother. The man broke into tears. Yes, his mother had, in years gone by, taught him these words, and had also prayed to God for him. Since then he had been a wanderer by sea and land; but the memory of her faith and love moved his heart. The appeals made to him were blessed by the Spirit of God. His life was spared, and proved the reality of his conversion.

Verse 13.—"*Like as a father.*" It is to be observed in this verse, what kind of mercy the prophet attributes to God. He says not, As man pities man, as the rich the poor man, as the strong the feeble, as the freeman the captive, but he makes mention of that pity which a father shews to his son, which is the greatest of all. The word רַחַם itself supports this view, as it properly signifies *viscarum commotis.* An example of this we have in 1 Kings iii. in the case of the woman who could not bear the slaughter of her child . . . . And afterwards in the case of the father of the prodigal. Luke xv.—*Musculus.*

Verse 13.—"*As a father pitieth his children.*" The father pitieth his children that are weak in knowledge, and instructs them; pities them when they are froward, and bears with them; pities them when they are sick, and comforts them; when they are fallen, and helps them up again; when they have offended, and upon their submission, forgives them; when they are wronged, and rights them. Thus "the Lord pitieth them that fear him."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 13.—"*So the Lord pitieth,*" &c. So and ten thousand times more than so. For he is the "Father of all mercies," and the Father of all the fatherhoods in heaven and earth. Eph. iii. 15.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 13.—"*The* LORD *pitieth.*" Though it be commonly said, "It is better to be envied, than pitied;" yet here it is not so: but it is a far happier thing to be pitied of God, than to be envied of men.—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 13.—"*Them that fear him.*" The fear of God is that deference to God which leads you to subordinate your will to his; makes you intent on pleasing him; penitent in view of past wilfulness; happy in his present smile; transported by his love; hopeful of his glory.—*George Bowen.*

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Verse 13.—"*Them that fear him.*" It may be understood of those who have not yet "received the spirit of adoption," but are yet "trembling at his word," those he "pities."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verses 13, 14.—The good father doth not turn off the child for being weak and sickly; but is so much the more indulgent as his necessity requires succour. If his stomach refuse meat, or cannot answer it with digestion, will he put him out of doors? No; when the Shunamite's son complains of his head, she lays him in her bosom. A mother is good to all the fruit of her womb, most kind to the sick infant: when it lies with its eyes fixed on her, not able to declare its grief, or to call for what it desires, this doubles her compassion: 'So the Lord doth pity us, remembering our frame, considering that we are but dust'; that our soul works by a lame instrument; and therefore he requires not that of an elemental composition, which he doth of angelical spirits. The son is commanded to write out such a copy fairly; he doth his best, far short of the original; yet the father doth not chide, but encourage him. Or he gives him a bow and arrows, bids him shoot to such a mark: he draws his utmost strength, lets go cheerfully; the arrow drops far short, yet the son is praised, the father pleased. Temptation assaults us, lust buffets us, secular business diverts us, manifold is our weakness, but not beyond our Father's forgiveness: 'He will spare us, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him,' Mal. iii. 17.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 14.—"*He knoweth our frame.*" "Our formation;" the *manner* in which we are constructed, and the *materials* of which we are made.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 14.—"*He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.*" Not like some unskilled empiric, who hath but one receipt for all, strong or weak, young or old; but as a wise physician considers his patient, and then writes his bill. Men and devils are but God's apothecaries, they make not our physic, but give what God prescribes. Balaam loved Balak's fee well enough, but could not go a hair's breadth beyond God's commission.—*William Gurnall.*

Verse 14.—"*He remembereth that we are dust.*" As if the very matter out of which man was first made, though without sin, were a disadvantage to him, in the resisting of sin. It was a disadvantage before man had any sin in him, how much more is it now when most men have nothing at all in them but sin, and the best have very much. "*That which is born of the flesh,*" saith Christ, "*is flesh.*" Corrupt nature can produce none but corrupt acts.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 14.—"*We are dust.*"

O how in this Thy quire of souls I stand,
—Propt by Thy hand—
A heap of sand!
Which busie thoughts—like winds—would scatter, quite,
And put to flight,
But for Thy might;
Thy hand alone doth tame
Those blasts, and knit my frame.

—*Henry Vaughan.*

Verses 14, 16.—"*We are dust.*" I never see one of those spiral pillars of dust which, like a mimic simoon, rush along the road upon a windy day, without thinking, "There is an image of life." Dust and a breath! Observe how the apparent "pillar" is but a condition, an active condition, of the particles of dust, and those particles continually changing. The form depends upon the incessant movement. The heavy sand floats on the impalpable air while it partakes its motion; let that cease and it falls. So the dull clods of the field, smitten by force, take wings and soar in life, partake for a time its rapid course, and then, the force exhausted, fall back into their former state. A whirl, a flux, maintained by forces without, and ceasing when they are withdrawn; that is our life.—*James Hinton, in "Thoughts on Health and some of its Conditions,"* 1871.

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Verse 15.—"*As for man.*" The insignificance of man is especially brought out by the use of ENOSH here.—*Robert Baker Girdlestone.*

Verse 15.—Man comes forth, says Job, like a *flower*, and is cut down; he is sent into the world the fairest and noblest part of God's works, fashioned after the image of his Creator, with respect to reason and the great faculties of the mind; he cometh forth glorious as the flower of the field; as it surpasses the vegetable world in beauty, so does he the animal world in the glory and excellence of his nature. The one, if no untimely accident oppress it, soon arrives at the full period of its perfection,—is suffered to triumph for a few moments, and is plucked up by the roots in the very pride and gayest stage of its being;—or if it happens to escape the hands of violence, in a few days it necessarily sickens of itself and dies away. Man likewise, though his progress is slower, and his duration somewhat longer, yet the periods of his growth and declension are nearly the same, both in the nature and manner of them. If he escapes the dangers which threaten his tenderer years, he is soon got into the full maturity and strength of life; and if he is so fortunate as not to be hurried out of it then by accidents, by his own folly and intemperance—if he escapes these, he naturally decays of himself,—a period comes fast upon him, beyond which he was not made to last. Like flowers or fruits which may be plucked up by force before the time of their maturity, yet cannot be made to outgrow the period when they are to fade and drop of themselves; when that comes, the hand of nature then plucks them both off, and no art of the botanist can uphold the one, or skill of the physician preserve the other, beyond the periods to which their original frames and constitutions were made to extend. As God has appointed and determined the several growths and decays of the vegetable race, so he seems as evidently to have prescribed the same laws to man, as well as all living creatures, in the first rudiments of which there are contained the specific powers of their growth, duration and extinction; and when the evolutions of those animal powers are exhausted and run down, the creature expires and dies of itself, as ripe fruit falls from the tree, or a flower preserved beyond its bloom, drops and perishes upon the stalk.—*Lawrence Sterne*, 1713—1768.

Verse 15.—The psalmist saith of man, "*as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.*" It is not a flower of the *garden*, but of the "*field.*" This latter is more subject to decay than the former, because it lies more open to the nipping air and violent winds, and to the browsing mouth of the beast, and is more liable to be trampled upon: by all these ways it decayeth as well as by the scorching sun, and its own fading temper.—*John Edwards, in "Theologia Reformata."*

Verse 15.—"*As a flower of the field.*"

What is life! like a flower, with the bane in its bosom,
To-day full of promise—to-morrow it dies!—
And health—like the dew-drop that hangs in its blossom,
Survives but a night, and exhales to the skies!
How oft 'neath the bud that is brightest and fairest,
The seeds of the canker in embryo lurk!
How oft at the root of the flower that is rarest—
Secure in its ambush the worm is at work?

—*James Beattie*, 1735—1803.

Verse 16.—"*The wind passeth over it, and it is gone,*" etc. A breath of air, a gentle wind (רוּחַ) passes over him and he is gone. It would not be so strange if a tempest, a whirlwind, passing over should sweep him away. The psalmist means much more than this. The gentlest touch, the whispering breeze, bears him off. He soon becomes a stranger, no more known in the little space he once filled, going out and coming in.—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 16.—"*The wind passeth over it, and it is gone.*" It is well known that a hot wind in the east destroys at once every green thing. Nor is this to be wondered at, if, as Dr. Russell says, the winds sometimes "bring with them a degree and kind of heat, which one would imagine came out of an oven, an

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which, when it blows hard, will affect metals within the houses, such as locks of room doors, nearly as much as if they had been exposed to the rays of the sun." The blasting effect which seems to be here alluded to, of certain pestilential winds upon the animal frame, is by no means exaggerated by the comparison to the sudden fading of a flower. Maillet describes hundreds of persons in a caravan as stifled on the spot by the fire and dust, of which the deadly wind, that sometimes prevails in the eastern deserts, seems to be composed. And Sir John Chardin describes this wind "as making a great hissing noise," and says that "it appears red and fiery, and kills those whom it strikes by a kind of stifling them, especially when it happens in the day time."—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 16.—"*The place thereof shall know him no more,*" &c. Man, once turned to dust, is blown about by every wind, from place to place; and what knows the place, when dust falls upon it; whether it be the dust of a prince, or of a peasant; whether of a man, or of a beast? And must not man then needs be very miserable, when time and place, the two best helps of life, do both forsake him? for what help can he have of time, when his days are but as grass? What help of place, when his place denies him, and will not know him?—*Sir R. Baker.*

Verse 17.—"*But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.*" No human benevolence is perpetually the same; but by experience we see that those who are kind to-day, may be changed into tyrants to-morrow. Examples of this we have in the life of Nero, and many other rulers. Therefore lest we should suspect the goodness of God to bear any similar character, it is said with inconceivable consolation, that it shall never cease, but is prepared for ever for all those who fear and serve God.—*Musculus.*

Verse 17.—"*From everlasting to everlasting.*" From everlasting, by predestination; to everlasting, by glorification: the one without beginning, the other without end.—*Bernard.*

Verse 18.—"*To do them.*" Commands are to be remembered in order to practice; a vain speculation is not the intent of the publication of them.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 19.—"*The* LORD *hath prepared his Throne.*" The word signifies *established* as well as prepared, and might be so rendered. Due preparation is the natural way to the establishment of a thing; hasty resolves break and moulder. This notes,

1. The peculiarity of his authority. He prepares it, and none else for him. It is a dominion that originally resides in his nature, not derived from any by birth or commission; he alone prepared it. He is the sole cause of his own kingdom; his authority therefore is unbounded, as infinite as his nature. None can set laws to him, because none but himself prepared his throne for him. As he will not impair his own happiness, so he will not abridge himself of his own authority.

2. Readiness to exercise it upon due occasions. He hath prepared his throne, he is not at a loss, he needs not stay for a commission or instructions from any how to act. He hath all things ready for the assistance of his people, he hath rewards and punishments; his treasures and axes, the great mark of authority lying by him, the one for the good, the other for the wicked. His mercy he keeps by him for thousands, Exod. xxxiv. 7; his arrows he hath prepared by him for rebels, Ps. vii. 13.

3. Wise management of it. It is prepared: preparations imply prudence; the government of God is not a rash and heady authority. A prince upon his throne, a judge upon the bench, manages things with the greatest discretion, or should be supposed so to do.

4. Successfulness and duration of it. He hath prepared or established it. It is fixed, not tottering; it is an unmovable dominion; all the strugglings of men and devils cannot overturn it, nor so much as shake it. It is estab-

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lished above the reach of obstinate rebels; he cannot be deposed from it, he cannot be mated in it. His dominion, as himself, abides for ever. And as his counsel, so his authority, shall stand; and "he will do all his pleasure," Isai. xlvi. 10.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 19.—"*His throne in the heavens,*" denotes: 1. The glory of his dominion. The heavens are the most stately and comely pieces of the creation; his majesty is there most visible, his glory most splendid, Ps. xix. 1. In heaven his dominion is more acknowledged by the angels: his dominion is not disputed there by the angels that attend him, as it is on earth by the rebels that arm themselves against him. 2. The supremacy of his empire. The heavens are the loftiest part of the creation, and the only fit palace for him. 3. Peculiarity of this dominion. He rules in the heavens alone. His authority is not delegated to any creature, he rules the blessed spirits by himself; but he rules men that are on his footstool by others of the same kind, men of their own nature. 4. The vastness of his empire. The earth is but a spot to the heavens. What is England in a map to the whole earth, but a spot you may cover with your finger; much less must the whole earth be to the extended heavens. You cannot conceive the many millions of little particles that are in the earth; and if all put together be but one point to that place where the throne of God is seated, how vast must his empire be! He rules there over the angels, which excel in strength, those hosts of his which do his pleasure, in comparison of whom all the men in the world, and the power of the greatest potentates, is no more than the strength of an ant or fly. And since his throne is in the heavens, it will follow that all things under the heaven are part of his dominion; the inferior things of earth cannot but be subject to him; and it necessarily includes his influence on all things below, because the heavens are the cause of all the motion in the world. See Hosea ii. 21, 22. 5. The easiness of managing this government. His throne being placed on high, he cannot but behold all things that are done below; the height of a place gives advantage to a clear eye to behold things below it. "*The* LORD *looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand,*" Ps. xiv. 2. He looks not down from heaven as if his presence were confined there, but he looks down majestically, and by way of authority. 6. Duration of it. The heavens are incorruptible, his throne is placed there in an incorruptible state. The throne of God outlives the dissolution of the world.—*Condensed from Charnock.*

Verse 19.—"*His kingdom ruleth over all.*" His Lordship is universal. First, over all *time:* other lords die, but he is eternal. Eternity is properly the duration of an uncreated Ens. It is improperly taken, either for things that have both beginning and end, as everlasting mountains; divers such phrases in Scripture; or for things that have a beginning but shall have no end; so are angels and men's souls eternal; so, eternal life, eternal fire. But God calls himself, "I AM," Exod. iii. 14: I am what I have been, I have been what I am, what I am and have been I shall be. This attribute is incommunicable: all other things had a *non esse* preceding their *esse;* and they have a mutation tending to nothing. "They that war against thee shall be as nothing," Isa. xli. 12: all come to nothing unless they be upheld by the manutency of God: but "Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end," Ps. cii. 27. Thou turnest man to destruction, and again sayest, Return: "even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God," Ps. xc. 2; the sole umpire and measurer of beginning and ending. Secondly, over all *places*, heaven, earth, hell, Ps. cxxxv. 6. Kings are limited, and cannot do many things they desire: they cannot command the sun to stand still, nor the wind to blow which way they would: in the lofty air, in the depths of the sea no king reigns. They fondly flatter the pope with his long arms that they reach to purgatory; (but indeed both power and place are alike imaginary;) it is Christ alone that hath the keys of all places. Thirdly, over all *creatures;* binding the influences of Pleiades, and loosing the bands of Orion, Job xxxviii. 31; commanding the fire against the nature of it, to descend, 2 Kings i. 12; creating and ruling the stars, Amos v. 8; overruling the

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lions, Dan. vi. 22, sending the meteors, Psal. cxlviii. 8, hedging in the sea, lapping it up like a child in swaddling-clothes, Job xxxviii. 8, dividing, diverting, filling it. In both fire and water, those two raging elements that have no mercy, he shows mercy; delivers us from both in both. He calls the fowls, and they come; the beasts, and they hear; the trees, and they spring to obey him. He hath a raven for Elijah, a gourd for Jonah, a dog for Lazarus. Makes the leviathan, the hugest living creature, preserve his prophet. That a terrible lion should be killed, as was by Samson; or not kill, as they forbore Daniel; or kill and not eat, as that prophet, 1 Kings xiii.: here was the Lord. Over metals; he makes iron to swim, stones to cleave asunder. Over the devils; they must obey him though unwillingly. But they continually rebel against him, and break his will? They do indeed against his complacency, not against his permission. There is then no time, not the hour of death; no place, not the sorest torment; no creature, not the devil; but the Lord can deliver us from them. Therefore at all times, in all places, and against all creatures, let us trust in him for deliverance.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 19.—"*His kingdom ruleth over all.*" When Melancthon was extremely solicitous about the affairs of the church in his days, Luther would have him admonished in these terms, *Monendus est Philippus ut desinat esse rector mundi:* Let not Philip make himself any longer governor of the world.—*David Clarkson.*

Verse 20.—"*Bless the* LORD, *ye his angels,*" etc. The weight of offering praise unto God is too heavy for men to lift; and as for angels, it will take up all their strength and their best abilities to go about it.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 20.—"*Angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments.*" The chief excellence of the angels, the main cause of their strength and power, and of their immense superiority to mankind, is that which is set forth in the following words of the text. After the psalmist has described the angels as excelling in strength, he adds that they *do God's commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word.* For this is the only living source of lasting strength and power. They who do the will of God faithfully and obediently, have God for them; and then what can be against them? Then work itself strengthens them, and is like a tide bearing them onward; because it is *his* work. They on the other hand who run counter to the will of God, have God against them; and then what can be for them? Can a man push back the sea? can he lay hold on the sun, and drag him out of his course? Then may he hope to be strong, when he is fighting against the will of God . . . .

Hence we see the falsehood of that maxim, so common on the lips of those who plume themselves upon their mastery in the wisdom of this world—that Might is Right,—a maxim which exactly inverts the truth, and whereby the Prince of darkness is ever setting himself up against the Lord of heaven. The true principle, which is inverted and perverted in this falsehood,—the principle which ought to be written up in the council-chambers of princes and on the walls of senate-houses,—the principle which explains the secret of the strength of the angels, and indeed of all true strength, that is in accordance with the will of God,—may be stated in the selfsame words, if we only invert their order, Right is Might.—*Julius Charles Hare*, 1849.

Verse 20.—"*His angels that do his commandments,*" etc. They hearken to the voice of his word, they look upon God as the great General, and if he give out the word, they give out their strength, and go about the work willingly. They are very attentive to his commands; if he says, Go smite Herod for his pride, Balaam for his covetousness, David for his vainglory, Sennacherib for his blasphemy, and Sodom for its uncleanness, presently they go.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 20.—"*Commandments.*" *Davar* (דָּבָר), to speak, is rendered, "*command*" twenty times . . . direct personal communion between the Lord and his messengers seems to be implied.—*R. B. Girdlestone.*

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Verse 20.—"*Hearkening unto the voice of his word.*" Not only, mightily executing the word when heard; but, ever intently listening, *ready to catch the intimation of his will.*—*William Kay.*

Verse 20.—"*Hearkening unto the voice of his word.*" Angels are vigilant creatures, and wait for opportunities, and when they come they will not lose them. They neither slumber nor sleep, but hearken constantly what the Lord will say, what opportunity there will be for action; so, in Ezekiel i. 11, they are described with their wings stretched upward, manifesting their watchfulness and readiness for service. When Christ was born, a multitude of them appeared and celebrated his nativity, Luke ii. 13: when Christ was taken by Judas and his train, Peter drew his sword in his Master's defence; but what saith Christ? "Put up thy sword, it is not a time now to fight, but to suffer: thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? It is not a time now to pray for help, I must die, and the Scripture must be fulfilled; but if I would, my Father would bid the angels to aid me, and they presently would come, whole legions of them, yea, all the angels in heaven." Let us learn of angels to watch for opportunities, and take them. There are nicks of time wherein to do the work of Christ.—*William Greenhill.*

Verse 21.—"*Bless ye the* LORD, *all ye his hosts . . . that do his pleasure.*" The sun, moon, stars, and planets do "*his pleasure*" (Ps. xix. 1) unconsciously; the "angels" consciously, and with instinctive love, "hearken unto the voice of his word" (v. 20). Both together constitute the Lord's hosts.—*A. R. Fausset.*

Verse 22.—"*Bless the* LORD, *O my soul.*" That is to say, "Let thy vocation be that of the seraphim, O my soul, and enter on the life of heaven!" Why should I praise him? Can my praise be of any advantage to him? No; nor that of all the heavenly hosts. It is infinite condescension in him to hearken unto the praises of his most exalted creatures.

Let me bless the Lord, because no function will be more rich in blessings to my soul than this. The admiring contemplation of his excellence is in reality the appropriation thereof: the heart cannot delight in God, without becoming like God. Let me do it, because it is the peculiar privilege of man on this earth to bless the Lord. When he would find any to join him in this, he has to ascend the skies. Let me do it, because the earth is fully furnished with the materials of praise. The sands, the seas, the flowers, the insects; animals, birds, fields, mountains, rivers, trees, clouds, sun, moon, stars,—all wait for me to translate their attribues and distinctions into praise. But, above all, the new creation.

Let me do it, because of him, through him, and to him, are all the things that pertain to my existence, health, comfort, knowledge, dignity, safety, progress, power, and usefulness. A thousand of his ministers in earth, sea, and sky, are concerned in the production and preparation of every mouthful that I eat. The breath that I am commanded and enabled to modulate in praise, neither comes nor goes without a most surprising exhibition of the condescension, kindness, wisdom, power, and presence of him whom I am to praise. Is it not dastardly to be receiving benefits, without even mentioning the name, or describing the goodness of the giver? Let candidates for heaven bless the Lord. There is no place there for such as have not learned this art. How shall I praise him? Not with fine words. No poetic talent is here necessary. Any language that expresses heart-felt admiration will be accepted. Praise him so far as you know him; and he will make known to you more of his glory.—*George Bowen*, 1873.

Verse 23.—The last specification is completely comprehensive; "*all his works in all places of his wide dominions*"—all that he has made, whether intelligent or not intelligent; "*in all places*"—above, beneath, around: in heaven,

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earth, or hell: let them all fall into this universal chorus of praise and blessing, extolling Jehovah, the One supremely great, supremely good! Nor will he exempt himself; for his personal responsibilities as to his own heart, are his highest. Therefore he closes as he began, "*Bless the* LORD, *O my soul.*"—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 22.—"*Bless the* LORD, *O my soul.*" Inasmuch as the poet thus comes back to his own soul, his psalm also turns back into itself and assumes the form of a converging circle.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Verse 22.—"*Bless the* LORD, *all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the* LORD, *O my soul.*" We are very much struck by this sudden transition from "all God's works, in all places of his dominion," to himself, a solitary individual. Of course he had already included himself; himself had been summoned when he summoned all God's works in all places of his dominion; but it seems as if a sudden fear had seized the Psalmist, the fear of by any possibility omitting himself; or, if not a fear, yet a consciousness that his very activity in summoning others to praise, might make him forgetful that he was bound to praise God himself, or sluggish in the duty, or ready to take for granted that he could not himself be neglecting what he was so strenuous in pressing on all orders of being. We have a great subject of discourse here. Solomon has said, "They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept." Alas! how possible, how easy, to take pains for others, and to be neglectful of one's self: nay, to make the pains we take for others the reason by which we persuade ourselves that we cannot be neglecting ourselves. How important, then, that, if with the Psalmist we call on all God's works in all places of his dominions to bless the Lord; how important, I say, that we add, like persons bent on self-examination, and fearful of self-deceit, "*Bless the* LORD, *O my soul.*"—*Henry Melvill.*

Verses 1, 2, 22.—"*Bless the Lord, O my soul . . . Bless the Lord, O my soul,*" with the "*Bless the Lord all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul,*" verse 22; these two form the thrice-repeated blessing from the Lord to the soul in the Mosaic formula, Num. vi. 24—26.—*A. R. Fausset.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

Verse 1.—"The Saints blessing the Lord." See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1,078.

Verse 1.—I. We should bless the Most High himself. It is possible to fail to bless *him*, while we praise his gifts, his word, his works, his ways. II. We should bless him individually: "*My* soul." Not merely the family through the father, nor the people through the pastor; nor the congregation through the choir; but personally. III. We should bless him spiritually: "soul." Not only with organ, voice, offering, works, &c. IV. We should bless him unreservedly: "All that is within me." V. We should bless him resolutely. David preached self-communion, self-encouragement, and self-command.—*W. Jackson.*

Verse 1.—Here is, I. Self-converse: "Oh my soul." Many talk freely enough to others, but never talk to themselves. They are strangers to themselves—not on speaking terms with themselves—take no interest in their own souls—are dull and melancholy when alone. II. Self-exhortation: "Bless the Lord, O my soul." Thy Creator, thy Benefactor, thy Redeemer. III. Self-encouragement: "All that is within me"—every faculty of my mental, moral and spiritual being: with ten strings—every chord in motion. No need for one faculty of the soul to say to another, "know the Lord, for all shall know him from the least even unto the greatest."—*G. R.*

Verse 1 (*First clause, and v.* 22, *last clause*).—Personal worship the Alpha and Omega of religion.—*C. Davis.*

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Verse 2.—Inquire into the causes of our frequent forgetfulness of the Lord's mercies, show the evil of it, and advise remedies.

Verse 3.—I. Forgiveness is *in* God: "There is forgiveness with thee." It is his nature to forgive as well as to punish sin. II. It is *from* God. None can forgive sin but God. None can reveal forgiveness but God. III. It is *like* God, full, free, and everlasting—"all thine iniquities."—*G. R.*

Verse 3.—"*Who healeth all thy diseases.*" I. Why is sin called a disease? 1. As it destroys the moral beauty of the creature. 2. As it excites pain. 3. As it disables from duty. 4. As it leads to death. II. The variety of sinful diseases to which we are subject. Mark vii. 21—23; Gal. v. 19, &c. III. The remedy by which God heals these diseases. 1. His pardoning mercy through the redemption of Christ. 2. The sanctifying influences of grace. 3. The means of grace. 4. The resurrection of the body.—*From* "*The Study*," 1873.

Verse 3 (*last clause*).—Our diseases by nature, our great Physician, the perfect soundness which he works in us, results of that soundness.

Verses 3, 4, 5.—Mercy's Hexapla. I. Three curses removed. 1. Guilt put away. 2. Corruption cured. 3. Destruction averted. II. Three blessings bestowed. 1. Favours that can gratify. 2. Pleasures that can satisfy. 3. Life that can never die. Or (*Verse* 3) I. Pardon. II. Purification. (*Verse* 4) III. Redemption. IV. Coronation. (*Verse* 5) V. Plenty bestowed. VI. Power renewed.—*W. Durban.*

Verse 4 (*first clause*).—The Redemption of David's life from destruction. 1. His shepherd life. 2. His military life. 3. His persecuted life. 4. His regal life. 5. His spiritual life.—*W. J.*

Verse 4.—What is redeemed, and from what? Who are redeemed, and by whom?

Verse 5.—I. A singular condition—satisfaction. II. A singular provision—good things. III. A singular result—youth renewed.

Verse 5.—"Rejuvenescence." See Macmillan's "Ministry of Nature," pp. 321—347.

Verse 7.—I. God would have men know him. II. He is his own revealer. III. There are degrees in the revelation. IV. We may pray for increased knowledge of him.

Verse 8.—I. Mercy specified: "Merciful and gracious." II. Mercy qualified: "Slow to anger." Mercy itself may be angered, and then how terrible is the anger. III. Mercy amplified: "Plenteous in mercy." "He will abundantly pardon;" and he only knows what abundant pardon means.—*G. R.*

Verse 9.—I. What God will do to his people. He will sometimes chide—contend with them. 1. Providentially, by outward trials. 2. Experimentally, by inward conflicts. II. What he will not do to them. 1. Not chide continually in this life. 2. Not chide in the least hereafter. "The days of their mourning shall be ended."—*G. R.*

Verse 10.—Work out the terrible supposition, show the reasons why it has not yet been actually so; then suggest that it may yet become a terrible fact, and exhort the guilty to seek mercy.

Verses 11, 12, 13.—The height, length and depth of divine love.

Verse 12.—"Plenary Absolution." See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1, 108.

Verse 12.—I. The union implied. Between man and his transgressions. 1. Legally. 2 Actually. 3. Experimentally. 4. Eternally, in themselves considered. II. The separation effected. 1. By whom? "He hath," etc. 2. How? By his own Son coming between the sinner and his sins. III. The Re-union prevented. "As far," etc. When east and west meet, then, and not till then, will the re-union take place. As the two extremities of a straight line can never meet, and cannot be lengthened without receding further from each other, so it will ever be with a pardoned sinner and his sins.—*G. R.*

Verses 13, 14.—"The Tender Pity of the Lord." See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 941.

Verses 13, 14.—I. Whom God pities; "them that fear him." II. How he

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pities; "as a father pitieth his children." III. Why he pities; "for he knoweth our frame." He hath reason to know our frame, for he framed us, and having himself made man of the dust, "he remembers that we are dust."—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 14.—I. Man's Constitution. II. God's Consideration.—*W. D.*

Verse 15.—Man's earthly career. His rise, progress, glory, fall, and oblivion.

Verses 15—18.—I. What man is when left to himself. "As for man," etc. 1. What here? His days are as grass, his glory as the flower of grass. 2. What hereafter? swept away by a blighting wind, by a blast of divine anger—known no more on the earth, known only in perdition. II. What the mercy of God does for him. 1. Makes a covenant of grace on his behalf from everlasting. 2. Makes a covenant of peace with him in this life. 3. Makes a covenant of promise to him for an eternity to come. III. Who are the objects of this mercy? 1. Those who fear God. 2. Who walk in the footsteps of pious ancestors. 3. Who rely upon covenant mercy. 4. Who are faithful to their covenant engagements.—*G. R.*

Verse 18.—The covenant, in what respects we can keep it, in what frame of mind it must be kept, and what is the practical proof of so doing.

Verse 19.—"A Discourse upon God's Dominion." See Charnock's Works [Nicol's Edition, Vol. II., pp. 400—499.]

Verse 19.—I. The nature of the throne. II. The extent of the dominion. III. The character of the monarch. IV. The consequent joy of the subjects: "Bless the Lord."

Verse 20.—The angels' service instructive to us. I. Their personal strength is excellent. As servants of God we also should see to our own spiritual health and vigour. II. They are practical in their obedience, not theorists. III. They are attentive while at work, ready to learn more, and holding fellowship with God, who speaks personally to them. IV. They do all in the spirit of joyful praise, blessing the Lord.

Verses 20, 21,—I. The centre of praise: "Bless the Lord." All praise centres in him. II. The concert of praise. 1. Angels. 2. The hosts of the redeemed. 3. Ministers in particular. 4. The surrounding creation. III. The climax of praise: "Bless the Lord, O my soul." This has the highest claim upon me for gratitude and praise. Vast as the chorus may be, it will not be perfect without my note of praise. This is the culminating note: "Bless the Lord, O my soul."—*G. R.*

Verse 21.—Who are God's ministers? What is their business? To do his pleasure. What is their delight? To bless the Lord.

Verses 21, 22.—Henry Melvill has a notable sermon upon "The Peril of the Spiritual Guide." The drift of it may be gathered from the extract which we have placed as a note upon the passage.

Verse 22.—I. The Chorus. II. The Echo.—*W. D.*

WORKS UPON THE HUNDRED AND THIRD PSALM.

Meditations and Disqvisitions, upon Seven Consolatarie Psalmes of David . . . by Sir RICHARD BAKER, Knight, 1640. [pp. 143—172.]

Gratitude: an Exposition of the Hundred and Third Psalm. By the Rev. JOHN STEVENSON, Vicar of Patrixbourne-with-Bridge, Canterbury. 1856.

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